MEMOIRS

OF A

MAGDALEN.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

MEMOIRS

OF A

MAGDALEN:

OR, THE

HISTORY

OF

LOUISA MILDMAY.

Now firſt publiſhed from a

SERIES OF ORIGINAL LETTERS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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THE HISTORY OF LOUISA MILDMAY.

LETTER I.

Sir ROBERT HAROLD *to* CHARLES MELMOTH, *Esq.*

Dear CHARLES,

YOU desire me to be very particular during my ſtay at Bath, in giving you an account of the gallantries carried on at this celebrated theatre of pleaſure; as if there could be any thing in the cuſtomary round of amour ſufficiently intereſting to a man of ſenſe; or, as if I had nothing in nature to do

but to play the impertinent Argus upon all my acquaintance, merely to have the mighty pleaſure of writing inceſſantly to the worſhipful Charles Melmoth, Eſq. —and no other inclination, but to feaſt that philoſophic ſenſualiſt with ſtories of contented cuckolds and perfidious lovers, together with the long liſt of romantic girls, who place the warmth of their conſtitution to the account of deſtiny, and kindly curſe the poor ſtars when their Strephons become ſurfeited.

Indeed, Charles, I have too much buſineſs on my own hands, to trouble myſelf with the affairs of other people — therefore, unleſs you are determined to be ſatisfied with ſuch caſual intrigues as I engage in myſelf—my correſpondence will be ſcarcely worth reading to a fellow of your eternal curioſity.— That this, however, may not diſpirit you too much, you may recollect what a propenſity I have to be particular with every

every woman who is fool enough to admit of my familiarity; — therefore, in this precious ſpot, as there is likelihood enough of employment, you may now and then, probably, receive ſome accounts ſufficiently intereſting to keep you from yawning in your great chair after dinner—a cuſtom which will at laſt make you ſhare the fate of the famous Charles Johnſon, who, if we may credit Mr. Pope, fell an abſolute martyr to obeſity.

I was interrupted in my lettter by a card from lady Haverſham, deſiring me to be at tea in the afternoon; and, intimating that there were ſome very handſome young ladies to paſs the evening with her: an inducement which, ſhe ſaid, would ſecure her the pleaſure of my company; for ſhe juſtly enough obſerved, that the circumſtance of her being my ſiſter might render me other-

wiſe indifferent about the invitation.—You know well enough, Melmoth, what pains I always take in the decoration of my outſide; and you have a thouſand times ſworn that I am the moſt egregious coxcomb in the kingdom.—Perhaps I am—and yet, between ourſelves, I have always found this coxcombry of infinite ſervice, not only among the women, but among the very men, highly ſoever as the generality of them ſeemed to deſpiſe an attention to the elegance of externals: how often have I chuckled, when you and I walked together in the ſtreets, (you in a ruſty black frock, and I perhaps in a magnificent ſuit of embroidery) to ſee, notwithſtanding all your contempt of dreſs, with what an unceaſing aſſiduity you kept hold of my arm, and endeavoured, upon the merit of your companion's coat, to be thought a man of conſequence by the vulgar—In proportion to the ſhabbineſs of your

own

own appearance, you thought yourſelf obliged to make a benefit of mine; and, how frequently have you ſwelled up with an air of the moſt conſcious importance, when ſome ſhopkeeper has obſerved, with an audible voice, that there was no doubt, for all the ruſtineſs of your coat, but what you were ſomebody, or you would never be ſo familiar with ſo well dreſt a gentleman—Ah Melmoth, Melmoth, you philoſophers are actuated as much by vanity as the moſt mincing fopling in the univerſe--Your very contempt of appearance is the abſolute reſult of your pride, tho' you would willingly put it down as the conſequence of your ſenſe or the effect of your humility; and I am perfectly ſatisfied that Diogenes in his tub was fifty times a greater coxcomb than Alexander, though the puppy ridiculouſly affected to look down on the conqueror of the world, and miſtook for an exalted emanation of ſoul what was nothing but

a deſpicable ſally of impertinence.—All this, Charles, you will poſſibly ſay is very true, but at the ſame time I am rather apprehenſive you will tell me it is very dull alſo.—I ſhall therefore conſult your amuſement in preference to your inſtruction, and for once ſuffer ſober ſentiment to make room for flimſey narrative.

Well then, about ſeven o'clock I dreſſed myſelf in a very elegant ſuit of blue velvet embroidered with ſilver, and went in a chair to my ſiſter Haverſham's; where I found a large company of both ſexes; and, in juſtice to the intimation contained in her card, I muſt acknowledge that I never ſaw a group of handſomer women in my life—One in particular engaged my utmoſt attention, whom I ſoon found to be LOUISA MILDMAY, of Oxfordſhire,—the celebrated toaſt, who, though no more than

twenty-

twenty-one, has made the whole county a thouſand times drunk; and occaſioned four duels, in which two hot-headed blockheads were actually killed, and a third ſo diſabled, by a wound in his hip, as to be doomed for life to crutches and repentance.

As I had often heard of this young lady's beauty, and was moreover told that ſhe affected an inſenſibility to the moſt engaging efforts of gallantry; I reſolved to exert my utmoſt abilities in hopes of making ſome little impreſſion on her boſom; as I conſidered that it would greatly add to my character among the women if I could poſſibly ſucceed with one, who was looked upon by both ſexes with an equal mixture of envy and admiration. —Actuated by this motive, my buſineſs was to work upon her pride without exciting her reſentment; and to ſhew

that, irreſiſtible as ſhe had hitherto proved, there was one man who could nevertheleſs behold her with indifference.—I therefore behaved to her with all the politeneſs of the moſt diſtant civility, while I ſung, chatted, and romped with little Harriot Townly; and paid, in ſhort, a much greater degree of attention to every other woman in the room.—The women, all highly delighted with the preference which was thus given them by a well dreſt young fellow, with a title and a large eſtate, in a manner devoured me; Harriot Townly in particular hung about me the whole evening; and, had it not been for the regard which I entertain for her brother, I do not know how far I might be tempted to carry my civilities.

As I was by much the beſt dreſt, and, without any compliment to myſelf, by much the likelieſt, fellow in the room,

room, Louiſa could not ſee this palpable neglect of her beauty without the moſt ſenſible mortification; accuſtomed to be worſhiped as a kind of divinity where-ever ſhe appeared, it was a moſt diſtreſſing circumſtance to find her inferiors in beauty treated with a preferable degree of reſpect; and, probably, ſuppoſing that I ſhould have fallen an inſtant conqueſt, like a number of others, the diſappointment doubled her chagrin; and I could eaſily perceive that ſhe caſt ſeveral glances of a mingled anger and contempt at your poor friend, as if ſhe equally ſaw through my purpoſe and deſpiſed it.—Be this however as it may, I retired early to give the ladies an opportutunity of talking about me; and the next morning went to breakfaſt at lady Haverſham's, on purpoſe to hear from my ſiſter, what was ſaid after my departure the preceding evening.

Being

Being ſhewn up, who ſhould I ſee, to my very great ſurprize, at the tea-table, but Miſs Louiſa—ſhe was alone with my ſiſter, and ſeemed ſomewhat confuſed at my appearance; all this, you know, had a very good ſign, and gave me an additional cauſe to purſue a plan of operation which already wore ſo probable a face of ſucceſs.—I therefore bowed with the coldeſt air of reſpect, and, with an inattention not altogether the moſt mannerly, entered into ſome trifling diſcourſe with my ſiſter, ſcarcely ever opening my lips to Louiſa; though ſhe kindly encouraged me, by ſome occaſional ſmiles at what I ſaid, to make her a party in the converſation.—Gueſſing pretty clearly that, if I took my leave, I ſhould have ſomething worth liſtening to in the afternoon, I wiſhed the women a good morning, and went away with telling lady Haverſham,

that

that I ſhould poſſibly call in on her before I went home to dreſs.

As you have heard ſo much about Miſs Mildmay, Charles, I ſhall now proceed to do what I ought to have done ſomewhat ſooner; that is, to give you a deſcription of her perſon, and an account of her family.—With regard to the firſt, ſhe is to the full as tall as Mrs. Yates of Drury-lane theatre, and has a ſenſibility of countenance, which we hardly ever meet where features are ſurprizingly regular—Her eyes are full, black, and languiſhing—her hair is as black as her eyes; and, from the preſent mode of dreſſing, appears to ſo much advantage, that, was ſhe poſſeſſed of no other perſonal attraction, it would be almoſt ſufficient to procure her a croud of admirers—Her forehead is finely open, and inconceivably white; and the two exquiſite arches which are formed by

by her brows, give ſuch a dignity to her looks, that none but an impudent fellow like myſelf could poſſibly ſee her without an inſtant veneration—As to her mouth, I never ſaw any thing ſo raviſhing—The roſy ripeneſs of the lips, while it captivates the eye, receives additional beauties from the delicious poutingneſs of their formation; ſo that they riſe with an equal charm both to the ſight and touch; and ſeem no leſs calculated to excite emotion, than to reward it—Her teeth are remarkably even— but they have not that milky whiteneſs which I have obſerved in beauties of leſs eminence —They have to me, however, a colour which exceeds it—They have a certain pearlineſs ſo uncommonly clear, that you can in a manner ſee through them; and this I fancy is not only neareſt to the genuine caſt of nature, but the beſt deſigned alſo for duration. Miſs Louiſa is one of thoſe delightfully formed

women,

women, whom a Muſſelman in a phrenſy of devotion would ſuppoſe to be a daughter of paradiſe—With the niceſt harmony of proportion, there is a voluptuous fleſhineſs through her perſon, which keeps the imagination continually on fire, and would kindle the boſom of an anchorite into an inſtant flame of ſenſuality. Some people, when they talk of beauties, prepoſterouſly ſuppoſe that a fine woman muſt be ſcarcely fatter than the figure of Time over the monument of general Hargrave—for my own part I am fond of ſome fleſh and blood about the bones Charles, and would even, of the two evils, rather pay my addreſſes to an Egyptian mummy than to an abſolute ſkeleton. Miſs Mildmay, however, ſo far from ſuffering the leaſt diſadvantage through this plenitude of perſon, acquires new charms from it; it gives a majeſty to her air which beſpeaks your veneration; and blends

blends all the elevation of dignity with all the tenderneſs of love. — Add to this, that there is a ſomething in the very tone of her voice which indicates the woman of condition, and gives you a ſuppoſition of rank before you receive the moſt diſtant account of her family.

As to her family, it is not more antient than reſpectable — She reckons among her anceſtors on the father's ſide, the great Sir Philip Sidney; and her mother is deſcended from a branch of the immortal Hampden, who ſo reſolutely oppoſed the infamous oppreſſions of that rapacious tyrant Charles the Firſt. — Her father poſſeſſes, at preſent, a good four thouſand pounds a year; her only brother has a company in the guards, and is univerſally eſteemed a very fine gentleman.

Notwith-

Notwithſtanding the advantages which Miſs Mildmay derives from family and fortune, her education however has rather been ornamental than uſeful; and ſhe is much better calculated for her preſent character of a toaſt, than for the neceſſary employment of miſtreſs to a family—She ſpeaks French and Italian —plays on the harpſicord and the guittar; and ſings with an exquiſite ſhare of taſte, though ſhe has leſs body to her voice, than you would imagine from the melody and fulneſs of her tones in common converſation.—Theſe accompliſhments, nevertheleſs, though they are generally as much as our young women of diſtinction poſſeſs now a days, are but very trifling matters when we come to enquire about a well informed mind, and a ſtability of principle.—The men are not, in fact, ſuch fools, my dear Melmoth, as the ladies may imagine; we love that they ſhould underſtand

ſtand French and Italian; and we liſten with pleaſure when they either ſing us a ſong, or favour us with a tune upon an inſtrument.—Yet theſe are all but ſecondary conſiderations:—After marriage, the ornamental parts of their education, like the beauties of their faces, very quickly leſſen in our eſteem--and nothing maintains its ground but ſterling ſenſe and real virtue.—A woman, therefore, who ſtudies to be the univerſal paſſion, is rather a dangerous character for a wife—Compoſed, in a great meaſure, of affectation and levity, her principal ſtudy is to pleaſe thoſe who are labouring to deſtroy her; and the only perſon whom ſhe declines to oblige is the unfortunate poor devil who is continually ſolicitous to promote her felicity.—For theſe reaſons, when I marry, I ſhall look out for a woman whoſe mind has been improved in ſome proportion with her perſon—If mere externals were able to captivate

captivate me, I do not know a lady in the world whom I would ſooner think of than Miſs Mildmay—But this rage for admiration, which I fear abſorbs all her faculties, forbids me to entertain any thoughts of ſettling with her for life—I could by no means bear the imputation of imaginary infidelity in my wife; and Cæſar himſelf could not be more delicate in this reſpect, when he ſaid That it was not enough for his wife to be virtuous, ſhe muſt be unſuſpected alſo.

When I look back upon the unconſcionable length of this letter—I wonder how I found inclination to write ſo much; if, however, you find inclination to read it, I ſhall not think my time miſapplied, ſince I am, dear Melmoth,

Your's very faithfully,

ROBERT HAROLD.

LETTER II.

Sir ROBERT HAROLD, *in Continuation to* CHARLES MELMOTH, *Eſq.*

PURSUANT to the intention which I had intimated of calling in upon my ſiſter Haverſham before dinner, I took but a turn or two round the rooms, and then went back to her houſe, where I had the good fortune of finding her alone; a circumſtance which afforded me a proper opportunity of making the neceſſary enquiries after Louiſa. As you know my ſiſter is a woman of great ſentiment and delicacy, I was obliged to begin in a round-about manner, and therefore careleſsly obſerved that we had a very agreeable party the preceding evening.

" Why Bob, ſays ſhe " I ſhould " ſcarcely ſuppoſe that to be your real

" opinion,

"opinion, by the hurry in which you "took leave of the company—But pray "what was the actual reaſon" (and here ſhe looked with a peculiar ſignificance of feature) "that robbed us ſo early of "a man devoted to the ſervice of the "ladies—I was in hopes your com-"plaiſance to them would have detained "you a little longer, if you were in-"fluenced by no regard for me—But "I can gueſs—I know that conſum-"mate vanity of your's too well not to "think you were laying out ſome "freſh baits for the fooliſh women who "honoured you with ſo peculiar a di-"ſtinction—You wanted to give them "an opportunity of talking about you "after you were gone; and are now "come to hear the whole ſubſtance "of their converſation, from a ſiſter, "who can keep nothing a ſecret from "you, notwithſtanding ſhe is acquainted

" with the licentious turn of your diſ-
" poſition, and heartily laments it."

" My dear lady Haverſham," return-
ed I, " how can you poſſibly treat me
" with ſo much ſeverity?—Buſineſs of
" the moſt preſſing nature forced me
" from you laſt night; and this morn-
" ing, to convince you, that nothing
" but the reſult of a brotherly affection
" induced me to call—."

" Ah, Bob, Bob," interrupted ſhe,
" don't I know you?—Or, if I did not—
" the deſign is too palpable to elude the
" eye of a common penetration.—But,
" be that as it may, what do you think
" of Louiſa Mildmay?"

" Think of her lady Haverſham!—

" Ay, think of her lady Haverſham
" —Come, come, I ſaw, under all that
" gallantry

" gallantry which you threw away on
" the other ladies laſt night, that your
" deſign was in a great meaſure to
" pique her—Had ſhe been wholly in-
" different to you, you would have
" treated her with common civility—
" But I ſaw, and I ſaw with pleaſure,
" that at the very firſt ſight ſhe made
" an impreſſion, which I hope in a little
" time will be attended with the moſt
" ſalutary conſequences.—The truth is,
" my dear Bob, I can never be happy
" while you remain unmarried — the
" continual exceſſes into which you are
" hurried by an unfortunate ſpirit of
" gallantry, fill me with a perpetual
" regret; you know I love you with a
" tenderneſs, perhaps, as great as ever
" ſiſter felt for a brother—and am doubly
" ſenſible of all your accompliſhments.
" —It therefore cuts me to the ſoul
" when I ſee a young fellow of your
" merit proſtituting thoſe talents in the

" deſtruction, as well as of his own hap-
" pineſs, as the happineſs of other people
" —which might be rendered equally
" creditable to himſelf and advantageous
" to ſociety.—On this account, I have
" been, for ſome time, looking out for a
" woman whoſe beauty might be able
" to ſecure your affection—whoſe merit
" might be able to engage your eſteem;
" and whoſe family might be able to give
" you an encreaſe of conſequence in
" your country.—Theſe very deſirable
" requiſites I find will be all anſwered
" in a union with Louiſa Mildmay—
" What ſay you then, my dear Bob—
" can you, for once, turn that fine ſenſe
" of which I know you maſter, to
" the certain means of eſtabliſhing your
" real happineſs; or will you ſtill perſiſt,
" in oppoſition both to your reaſon and
" your humanity, to proſecute ſuch
" courſes as you cannot view without
" contempt,

"contempt, nor conſider without de-
"teſtation."

"Upon my word lady Haverſham, replied I "you would make an admira-
"ble"—"Come, come, Bob," returned ſhe, "don't endeavour to ridicule an
"argument which you are unable to
"anſwer; nor, by an untimely affectation
"of wit, attempt to leſſen the credit of
"your own underſtanding.—Anſwer me
"therefore directly to the queſtion—
"What do you think of Miſs Mild-
"may?"

I do not know how it was, Melmoth, but the good ſenſe, and unaffected tenderneſs, of this amiable ſiſter, at that moment threw me off my guard—By the exertion of an irreſiſtable frankneſs, ſhe rendered me as ingenuous as herſelf; and I candidly told her that I thought Louiſa one of the moſt charming women

I had ever ſeen; adding however, at the ſame time, that I fancied ſhe poſſeſſed rather too great a conſciouſneſs of her own accompliſhments to think of domeſticating into the miſtreſs of a family.

Lady Haverſham to this replied, that I was entirely miſtaken—that Louiſa was at the bottom a woman of fine ſenſe, and would make an admirable wife whenever ſhe altered her condition.—"I will not indeed," ſays lady Haverſham, "take upon me to ſay, that a "young creature ſo univerſally admired "can be entirely exempted from a little "female vanity—You men are ſtrange "contradictions; you are for ever en-"deavouring to fill all the ſilly girls of "your acquaintance with a thouſand ri-"diculous notions of their own beauty; "and yet the moment you ſee this in-"ſiduous train of flattery take fire, you "deſpiſe

"deſpiſe them for their vanity, with-
"out once good naturedly recollecting
"that this vanity is principally occaſion-
"ed by yourſelves—As to Miſs Mild-
"may, if you have no other objection,
"I promiſe you there is but little to ap-
"prehend on this account—When her
"affections become once directed to a
"particular object, her fondneſs for ad-
"miration will naturally ceaſe: ſo that,
"with her regard for the man ſhe marries,
"joined to the ſenſe which ſhe muſt en-
"tertain of her duty, there can be no
"doubt but what ſhe will perform all the
"offices of a wife with the ſtricteſt pro-
"priety: at leaſt this is my opinion of
"her, and I dare ſay you are convinced,
"that, unleſs ſhe ſtood very high in my
"eſteem, I ſhould not be ſo earneſt in
"recommending her to your tendereſt
"conſideration."

From the ſolicitude which my ſiſter diſcovered in this affair, Charles, I was half

half inclined to think that the beautiful Louiſa was already actually ſtruck with my perſon and addreſs; and had inſinuated ſomething to my advantage during her viſit in the morning. I therefore dropt a diſtant hint of this nature, and, with an air half gay and half ſerious, enquired of lady Haverſham, whether ſhe thought there was any hope of Miſs Mildmay's concurrence in caſe a treaty ſhould be opened between the two families. — To this lady Haverſham replied, that I muſt firſt declare myſelf a lover, before ſhe could think of giving me any ſatisfactory anſwer on this head; that, was ſhe even poſſeſſed of ſecrets, ſhe would not ſacrifice a lady's delicacy to any conſideration; and wondered how I could think of participating in her confidence while I held her at ſuch a diſtance from mine.—Upon the whole, ſhe believed Miſs Mildmay might perhaps be diſengaged; and that, if I

really

really entertained a paſſion for her, ſhe did not ſee why I had a worſe chance of ſucceeding than any body elſe.

This, Charles, is the preſent ſituation of affairs—I have ſince been twice in company with Louiſa, and find the young baggage every moment growing on my imagination. —I don't know how it is—Matrimony has a frightful ſound with it, and yet I am determined ſome time or other to be married—We are all however for putting the evil day as far off as poſſible—At what particular period my knot is to be tyed I know not; but I fancy the period is not very remote, for every time I think of Miſs Mildmay I begin to be more reconciled to the reaſonableneſs of the marriage ceremony.— By and by, perhaps, I ſhall call it, in my ſiſter's language, a holy inſtitution; and think of beſpeaking ſome ſuch clumſey varlet as your-

ſelf

ſelf to ſtand godfather to one of my children.

Egad, Charles, the plot, as Bays ſays, begins to thicken.—Mr. Mildmay and his lady are juſt come to Bath, with a view of taking their daughter home in a week, ſo that what I do muſt be done ſpeedily—Upon my ſoul I did not conceive how near this girl was to my heart till I was alarmed with the news of our ſpeedy ſeparation.—Lady Haverſham's whole ſoul, I am ſenſible, is in the affair —and you need not be informed what a tenderneſs I bear for that amiable ſiſter.—You ſee, Charles, how I want to make a merit of following my own inclination.—But adieu, my dear boy—I am preparing to attend the adorable Louiſa to an aſſembly this evening, where I ſhall have her for a partner.—How all the fellows will envy my happineſs,

pineſs, Melmoth—eſpecially as I ſhall ſeize ſome favourable opportunities of whiſpering ſuch a ſtory in her ear, as will add conſiderably more than the nature of our entertainment to heighten the beauty of her complexion.

Your's,

R. HAROLD.

LETTER

LETTER III.

Miſs LOUISA MILDMAY *to Miſs* HARRIOT BEAUCLERK.

THE ſweet fellow, my charming friend, has at laſt declared himſelf—and in ſuch a manner!—Well, if I was at firſt ſtruck with the elegance of his figure, I am now raviſhed with the beauties of his converſation; and ſhall think myſelf the happieſt of all human beings, if an alliance can be fortunately brought about between our families.

In my laſt letter I told you what a very warm intereſt I have with the counteſs of Haverſham his ſiſter; and that ſhe had ſounded him in relation to his ſentiments of me, without giving him the leaſt intimation of my having any knowledge of her deſign.—The obliging

obliging countess executed her commission with the utmost delicacy and address, and easily discovered that all the attention which he paid to that Miss Townly, the first night of our acquaintance, was nothing more than the customary effects of his vivacity—She also discovered that he thought me infinitely handsome; (that was his very word) but she feared he would struggle as much as possible with his inclinations, as he seemed to think it unlikely I should have still retained my heart, in the midst of such numberless admirers (her ladyship was pleased to say) as were every day soliciting the happiness of my hand, and applying for the interest of my father—However, she was good-naturedly studious to make parties to bring us together, and last night he danced with me at a ball, which was given by the French ambassador, highly to the mortification, not only of that

Miss

Miſs Townly, but of ſeveral other ladies, who had flattered themſelves with the hope of engaging him for a partner.

During the whole courſe of the evening he ſcarcely attended to any thing but the means of obliging me.—In a thouſand little circumſtances he manifeſted both his tenderneſs and his delicacy; and in a thouſand delightful whiſpers inſinuated ſuch well turned compliments, as nothing but affectation itſelf could poſſibly be offended with—Whenever he touched my hand he was ſeized with ſo exquiſite a tremor as went to my very heart; and the envy which he viſibly excited in the boſom of almoſt every other woman in the room, gave him ſuch an additional charm, that he appeared as much an Oroondates to my fancy, as if I had been a heroine in ſome romance, and was

but

but newly delivered from the dungeon of a mercileſs giant, in conſequence of his proweſs and magnanimity.

I have before told you that the firſt time I ever ſaw Sir Robert Harold, was at the playhouſe here; and that the chaſtiſement which he there publicly beſtowed on two young officers, who rudely puſhed a lady down, and ſeemed rather inclined to defend than to apologize for their brutality, was what rivetted him in my affection—Yet Harriot, were you to ſee the dear fellow, you would be charmed with him—In his perſon he is tall—but not ſo tall as to be inelegant in the leaſt, nor ſo much inclined either to the extremes of corpulence or delicacy, as to be awkward on the one hand, or effeminate on the other; in ſhort, the medium is ſo happy as to give the cleareſt idea imaginable of manlineſs and grace; and his legs are ſo

admirably formed—Indeed, Harriot, I don't believe there is a finer made man in the univerſe.

As to his face there is no poſſibility of doing it juſtice in the deſcription.—You may perhaps imagine that I am on this occaſion actuated by the partiality of a giddy headed girl, who, having once confeſſed herſelf enamoured of a man, thinks it abſolutely neceſſary, for the credit of her taſte, to paint him as the invariable ſtandard of perfection.—Indeed, Harriot, I have no neceſſity to be under ſo ridiculous an influence—Sir Robert is ſo much the every thing I could wiſh him to be, that exaggeration would be as uſeleſs as it is impoſſible; and only betray the exceſs of my weakneſs, without adding in the leaſt to the credit of his attractions.—His face, however, my dear, is diſtinguiſhed with a certain energy of expreſſion,

expreſſion, that throws out a whole ſoul upon every feature; and darts ſuch an immediate meaning upon your boſom, that, had he been actually born dumb, he might have been ſet down as one of the firſt converſationiſts in the kingdom. Add to this, that there is an inherent ſtamp of condition in his air, which indicates the man of faſhion, and, at firſt ſight, no leſs engages your eſteem than it excites your admiration—His complexion is a dark brown—but ſo delicate.—His eyes are of a deep black; but replete with ſuch ſweetneſs and fire, that, though he kills you in a manner with a glance, he throws an elyſium on the wound, and leſſens every ſuffering of your ſenſibility with an extacy unutterable.—Do, Harriot, laugh at my flight if you pleaſe—but remember the time is arrived, when even my ſweet friend, with all her gravity, can be in over head and ears, and therefore ſhe ſhould

allow for the hyperboles of other doating girls, by the allowances which are neceſſary for her own.—One word more about externals and I have done. —You know I am a paſſionate admirer of fine teeth—Sir Robert has a moſt exquiſite ſet; and they are always ſo white —that nothing can equal their beauty, in my opinion, but the lips which encloſe them.

You have thus, my dear Harriot, a faint ſketch of Sir Robert Harold's exterior accompliſhments.—As to other matters, his education is finiſhed; his fortune is extremely large; his courage approved, and his underſtanding unqueſtionable. — He has indeed taken ſome extraordinary liberties among the women; but where a man poſſeſſes ſo many attractions, he muſt frequently meet with extraordinary encouragement —and if women will be fools, it is but

reaſonable

reaſonable they ſhould be ſufferers.—There is a part of his character which I know my dear Harriot will be highly taken with; and that is, though he is a great admirer of magnificence, he always makes it a rule to live conſiderably within his fortune, and to diſtribute many ſums towards the advancement of his poor tenants, which the moſt of our modern fine gentlemen injudiciouſly expend in horſe-racing, or in ſome other faſhionable amuſement equally inhuman and ridiculous. His benevolence, in this reſpect, joined to the moſt condeſcending affability, has rendered him the idol of all his inferiors in the country; and, for a circuit of twenty miles round his ſeat in Devonſhire, there is ſcarcely a peaſant who would not venture his life for Sir Robert Harold with the utmoſt chearfulneſs.—Before ever I ſaw him, Harriot, I was delighted with his character—ſo that it was no wonder, when I did ſee him, if

my heart paid an honeſt tribute to his merit, and paſſionately longed for a ſhare of his regard.—Well, but to the point—

This morning he came, about twelve, to enquire after my health and to pay the cuſtomary compliments; my papa and mamma were fortunately at a concert in the rooms, and the dear man had a whole hour at leaſt to entertain me on a ſubject, which few women, you know, whether they like the lover or not, ever think diſagreeable.—He was in a moſt charming undreſs, and looked ſo ſweetly!—You may be ſure, my dear, the nature of his converſation did not take, in any great degree, from the force of his perſonal accompliſhments.

After politely repeating his acknowledgements for the honour I had done him the preceding evening, he drew his

his chair close to mine, and, with an addreſs inconceivably tender, took up one of my motionleſs hands, preſſed it with an uncommon degree of fervor to his lips, and thus went on, delicately looking down the whole time, to prevent, as much as poſſible, the confuſion into which I muſt be naturally thrown by the tendency of his declaration.

"I would not, my charming Miſs "Mildmay, have preſumed thus early "to make you acquainted with my ſen- "timents, had not the ſhortneſs of your "ſtay at Bath obliged me in ſome "meaſure to break in upon the niceties "of decorum; and rendered it in a "manner neceſſary for me to ſeize the "preſent opportunity of coming to an "explanation, ſince it is more than "probable I may never meet with ano- "ther ſo favourable to my hopes:—A "lady like you, madam, who have been

" ſo long and ſo properly the object of
" univerſal admiration, cannot be any
" way ſurprized at finding a new adorer
" in every new acquaintance — but
" I will not addreſs you in the hack-
" neyed forms of common-place court-
" ſhip, nor offer a violence to that de-
" licacy which is always the companion
" of ſuperior merit, by entering into an
" unneceſſary deſcant upon thoſe ac-
" compliſhments, to which nothing but
" the groſſeſt ſtupidity can poſſibly be a
" moment inſenſible or unjuſt.—From
" the firſt hour, madam, I ſaw you, I
" paſſionately loved—and, though the
" diſregard which you conſtantly mani-
" feſted to the ſolicitation of numbers
" ſuperior to myſelf both in merit and
" in fortune, made it doubly preſump-
" tuous in me to aſpire at ſuch a bleſſ-
" ing as your hand—ſtill, ſo long as
" you appeared wholly diſengaged, I
" thought it would be a mark of vene-

" ration

" ration to you, as well as an act of
" juſtice to myſelf, to make a profeſſion
" of my everlaſting attachment; and to
" enquire whether it would be poſſible,
" for a length of time, and an undeviat-
" ing aſſiduity, to procure me adiſtant
" glimmering of ſucceſs.

" My ſiſter, whom I made the con-
" fidante of my paſſion, indeed adviſed
" me to an application to Mr. Mildmay
" —but, as a ſtep of that nature might
" perhaps interfere with ſome wiſh of
" the beautiful Louiſa's, I would on no
" account hazard it without her per-
" miſſion; young ladies very frequently
" ſee matters in a juſter light than their
" fathers—and there are a thouſand
" little reaſons for conſulting them on
" the buſineſs of their own hearts before
" a treaty is opened with their relations.
" —On this account, my ever adorable
" Miſs Mildway, I throw myſelf en-

" tirely

"tirely upon your generoſity.—If you "have any latent motive for wiſhing "me to decline a farther ſolicitation on "this ſubject, be candid and tell me ſo. "The man before you, madam, would "ſcorn to purchaſe the happineſs even of "his whole life, by the proſecution of "any ſuit in the leaſt incompatible with "your tranquility: he may be miſerable; "but he never will be mean; and has "too high an idea of Miſs Mildmay's "benignity to think ſhe would willing-"ly add to his anxiety by an unne-"ceſſary ſuſpence, if it is abſolutely out "of her power to think of ever remov-"ing it. You are ſilent, too lovely Miſs "Mildmay—fortunate be your ſilence, "madam: for the preſent I ſhall take "my leave; and, if I have not your "poſitive commands to the contrary, "will do myſelf the honour of waiting "upon Mr. Mildmay to-morrow morn-"ing."

Well

Well, Harriot, and what do you think now—had not I an aſtoniſhing command of myſelf never once to interrupt him during ſo long an addreſs?—I really think I had—but, ſome how, he was ſo reſpectful, and ſo manly; ſo delicately timid, yet ſo generouſly importunate; that, for the life of me, I could not ſay a ſyllable by way of reply.—A man of leſs breeding would have been inſolent at ſeeing me ſo confuſed; would have rudely ſtared me in the face, and endeavoured to read the ſentiments of my heart in the various changes of my countenance — perhaps too he would have expected one of my beſt curt'ſies; and imagined that I ought to bid him go, in polite terms, to my father. Sir Robert Harold, my dear Harriot, is a lover of quite a different ſtamp—the more encouragement he meets, the more reſpectful he appears; and interprets your ſilence into a meaning ſo refined,

as

as prevents the leaſt violence from reaching your ſenſibility.—Pray Heaven, Harriot, I do not prove too fond of him —But, my dear girl, adieu for the preſent —and believe me to be, with the moſt unalterable attachment,

Your own

LOUISA MILDMAY.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

Sir ROBERT HAROLD *to* CHARLES MELMOTH, *Esq.*

WELL, Charles, I am juſt this inſtant come from the old gentleman—he and I came to an agreement in a moment; and he was ſo highly delighted with my propoſal, that he even threw in a much greater addition to the girl's fortune than I could in conſcience have expected—He has been a ſaving cloſe fiſted codger, he tells me, theſe thirty years; and has had ſome conſiderable windfalls from his wife's family; he therefore can afford to give his daughter a good forty thouſand pounds, as he has no other child but his ſon, who will be amply provided for by the family eſtate, and other valuable contingencies — and thus, Charles, is your friend in the high road to matrimony; a month from this day is ſet apart

apart for the celebration of the nuptials —and the old gentleman has inſiſted upon my paſſing the laſt fortnight of that term at his houſe in Oxfordſhire.

When we had thus agreed about ſetting the lawyers immediately to work, and providing the wedding cloaths, I was introduced in form to Louiſa; who, to do her juſtice, was ſcarce a remove from a divinity— Her naturally fine complexion was deepened with a moſt enchanting glow of conſciouſneſs; and the delicious ſenſibility that ſwam in her charming black eyes, gave her, in my opinion, an air which rendered her wholly irreſiſtable.— She received my ſalute with dignity, yet with condeſcenſion; and the obliging old people, very properly judging their abſence would be infinitely more agreeable than their company, withdrew in a little time, and gave me an opportunity of thanking

ing her in the moſt paſſionate terms for making me the happieſt of mankind.—She was pleaſed, I could plainly ſee, with my emotion —yet ſhe laboured under all that diſtreſs which a delicate woman is ſure to feel upon the proſpect of ſo important a change in her condition—I therefore took my leave as ſoon as poſſible, to give her an opportunity of recovering her ſpirits, but not before I had previouſly obtained her permiſſion to drink tea with her in the evening.

And now, Charles, that the affair is thus far adjuſted, let me honeſtly open my whole heart to you—I ſcarcely care a ſingle ſixpence whether or no it be ever brought to a concluſion. — My marriage with this young lady is rather the reſult of my conviction than the conſequence of my choice—and I find my vanity infinitely more gratified in running away with ſuch a prize from a

crowd

crowd of contending admirers, than my happineſs promoted in obtaining it for myſelf. With all my turn for diſſipation, I am nevertheleſs thoroughly ſatisfied that, till a man becomes domeſticated, he never can enjoy an hour of real content. —The pleaſures which ariſe from an unlimitted courſe of amour, even where a man is beſt received, never compenſates for the trouble he is obliged to undergo in the proſecution; and he has this conſtant mortification to check the tide of his tranſport, that the woman to whom he is moſt ſtrenuouſly attached is frequently entitled to his abhorrence, and always to his contempt—In proportion as ſhe adds to his pleaſure ſhe muſt ſink in his eſteem; for before ſhe can manifeſt a compliance to his wiſhes, ſhe muſt burſt through every reſtraint of decorum and delicacy, and ſacrifice all regard to her own character and the honour of her family. — A

woman

woman thus loſt to ſentiment is below the conſideration of any ſenſible man—therefore the ſooner we get out of this uncomfortable track, the ſooner we lay a probable foundation for our own happineſs.—I am now eight and twenty years old, Melmoth, and it is high time for me to think of getting ſons and daughters for myſelf, inſtead of waſting my time to increaſe the families of other people—Beſides, I am weary of venturing my life every moment to gratify the licentious diſpoſition of a pack of women, who are more deſpicable in my opinion, and leſs attached to my perſon, than many of the mercenary poor creatures, whom I can purchaſe for a couple of guineas and a trifling treat at the tavern.—All theſe conſiderations put together, induce me to think marriage a very deſirable inſtitution;—and, as I never knew what it was to be heartily in love, I think I have as fair a chance for

felicity with this beautiful girl I am engaged to, as with any body elſe.—My reaſon, to ſay nothing of my vanity, therefore is much more concerned in the affair than my inclination. Before I was ſure of her, I really felt ſome anxieties on her account—but now I am pretty certain both of her heart and her perſon, I almoſt begin to ſhudder at the approaching alliance, notwithſtanding my abſolute conviction of its propriety.—Such unaccountable creatures are we, Melmoth; impatiently burning for what we find it difficult to enjoy; and ſickening with apprehenſion the moment we get the bleſſing in our reach. —There is no deſcribing my preſent ſituation to you; I am the ſtrangeſt compound of contradiction in the whole circuit of creation, and am one minute ready to reject what the next appears moſt eſſential both to my honour and my happineſs.

Lady

Lady Haverſham has juſt now done a very obliging thing with her uſual tenderneſs and delicacy; ſhe had promiſed to drink tea with me in the evening at Louiſa's—and was to call on me in her chariot at ſeven for that purpoſe —but being prevented by the intruſion of ſome unexpected viſitors, ſhe ſent one of her footmen to me with a little box, ſealed up in a large ſheet of paper, which contained a ſuit of diamonds to the value of five thouſand pounds — they were accompanied by the following note, which I aſſure you gave me every whit as much ſatisfaction as the preſent itſelf.

"MY dear brother has this day made "me the happieſt woman in the world. "—As a mark of my gratitude, I "therefore beg he will accept of this "little box, and preſent it at a conve-"nient time to his intended lady—The

"leaſt heſitation to receive it I ſhall "conſider as a proof of his neglect; "and a want of that ſincere and cordial "affection which he will be always ſure "of finding in his

"Affectionate Siſter,

"HAVERSHAM."

The jewels, Charles, are elegant to an exceſs—and I purpoſe carrying them to the amiable girl in the evening; I dare ſay we ſhall have a delicious tete a tete—for the old people, as their ſtay is to be ſo ſhort in Bath, have a variety of engagements on their hands. What a pity it is, my dear friend, that our fancy will not always obey the dictates of our reaſon—Do you know now that I would give a thouſand pounds to be heartily in love with Miſs Mildmay; the match is really ſo deſirable in itſelf, and my ſiſter appears ſo ſtrenuous for its taking place, that I am actually concerned to find

findmyſelf ſo little influenced by inclination—Yet I don't know, upon the whole, but that thoſe marriages are the beſt calculated for felicity which have the leaſt of paſſion in their commencement: I have ſeen a multitude of people venturing their necks to come together, who, a month after their union, would venture their necks for a divorce with an equal degree of alacrity.—One thing I am aſſured of, Charles; which is, that, if I do not make a fond huſband, I ſhall at leaſt make a good natured one.—I flatter myſelf that hitherto I have ſhewn no great want either of humanity or manners; and, let me tell you, that a man of this caſt is much more likely to make a woman happy, than he who ſets out upon a romantic ſtock of rapture, and is much too exalted a lover to be ſatisfied merely with content. The generality of men, by expecting too much in their marriages, ridiculouſly ſacrifice thoſe bleſſings which

the ſtate is really capable of affording; inſtead of a rational tranquility they are buoyed up with a continual notion of tumultuary tranſports; and imagine, if they do not find their wives ſomething more than goddeſſes, they muſt be ſomething leſs than women. In like manner the women look for as much courtſhip after the union as before it: accuſtomed to an intoxicating round of fulſome adulation, they really believe themſelves the wonders we repreſent them; and think it ſurprizing that we ſhould relax in the leaſt from that profound adoration with which they have all along been ſo reſpectfully diſtinguiſhed. Thus both parties being led to expect too much, as I have already ſaid, each is unhappily diſappointed, and good-naturedly aſcribes to the other thoſe very uneaſineſſes which actually proceed from the folly of its own imagination. Hence a thouſand

jealouſies

jealouſies and altercations take their birth; and hence poor matrimony undergoes a thouſand cenſures from its want of power to make a couple of fools happier than is conſiſtent with the lot of humanity, or the narrowneſs of their own underſtandings.—But adieu, dear Charles—it is high time to dreſs, and I am determined to be as much as poſſible with Louiſa, in hopes that the numberleſs attractions which ſhe poſſeſſes may make me fairly enamoured, againſt the celebration of our nuptials. I am, honeſt Melmoth,

Your own

ROBERT HAROLD.

LETTER V.

Miſs HARRIOT BEAUCLERK *to Miſs* LOUISA MILDMAY.

IF poſſible, my charming friend, I ſhall be down with you in Oxfordſhire by the day which I hope will make you the happieſt of women; and I wiſh with all my ſoul I could get my mama's permiſſion to go down ſooner, as I do not at all approve of truſting you ſo much in company with a man of whom you are ſo paſſionately fond, till the ceremony takes place. You tell me that you and he ſit up for hours together, and enjoy the moſt exquiſite tete a tetes after the family are in bed—Take care, my deareſt Louiſa, take care; theſe tete a tetes are very dangerous things to a woman of your circumſtances; and an inſidious lover might, in

ſome

ſome unguarded moment, reap ſuch an advantage from them, as ſhould make my ſweet friend an abſolute dependant on his mercy, both for happineſs and reputation.

Do not imagine, my dear girl, that I am here inſinuating any improper doubts of your diſcretion; I know you have as much prudence as any young woman in England—but, believe me, Louiſa, I ſhould tremble for any young woman in England whom I ſaw in your circumſtances. Your lover is a man endued with every art of perſuaſion and every advantage of perſon—he is in a few days to be your huſband; and, from the nature of his connexion, as well as from the exceſs of your tenderneſs, muſt poſſeſs the moſt unlimited ſhare of your confidence. If, therefore, in ſome unhappy moment, he ſhould be uncommonly importunate for an anticipation

pation of his happineſs, my beautiful friend might find it difficult to withſtand his ſolicitations; the tenderneſs of her heart might poſſibly prevail over the force of her underſtanding; and, to eſtabliſh a momentary repoſe in his boſom, ſhe might, perhaps, with a madneſs of generoſity, deſtroy the everlaſting tranquility of her own.

Of all the ſtages in a woman's life, none is ſo dangerous as the period between her acknowledgement of a paſſion for a man, and the day ſet apart for her nuptials. Her mind, during that interval, is ſuſceptible of impreſſions unuſually tender; and the happy lover is admitted to a number of familiarities, which are in themſelves the ſtrongeſt temptations. Without any premeditated deſign, he is frequently inflamed by the unreſerved ſoftneſs which his miſtreſs aſſumes in the unſuſpecting confidence

of

of her heart; and, unable, perhaps, to reſiſt the impetuoſity of his wiſhes, he endeavours to make the moſt of his opportunity. Secure of pardon, even if he gives the moſt palpable offence, he proceeds with boldneſs to the accompliſhment of his purpoſe; and too many have been the unhappy young women who found themſelves undone, before they entertained even a diſtant fear of deſtruction.

It is no uncommon circumſtance among the men, my deareſt Louiſa, to try how far there is a poſſibility of carrying their power over a believing woman; and, greatly as they ſeem to be obliged by the ſacrifice which we make them, I do not imagine there was ever a caſe in which one of them liked us the better for ſo convincing a proof of our affection—whereas, on the contrary, we

we have numberleſs inſtances where that very proof has excited their diſguſt, and induced them to caſt us off

"*Like a deteſted Sin,*"

as poor Monimia ſays, to the irreparable injury both of our peace and our characters. Even where our permitting a lover to anticipate the rights of a huſband no way interrupts the treaty of marriage, ſtill it leſſens us ſo much in his opinion, that he ever after ſuſpects our fidelity, and imagines that what proceeded entirely from a paſſionate regard for himſelf, was the actual reſult either of levity or conſtitution. This ſingle ſuppoſition is of itſelf ſufficient to imbitter all the ſweets of the hymenæal union; to blaſt all the roſes round the pillows of love, and to plant perpetual thorns in their ſtead.

Excuſe

Excuſe me, my deareſt Louiſa, for my anxiety on this occaſion—By my uneaſineſs judge of my friendſhip, and be aſſured you are no leſs tender than happineſs or honour to the boſom of your

HARRIOT BEAUCLERK.

LETTER

LETTER VI.

Sir ROBERT HAROLD *to* CHARLES MELMOTH, *Esq.*

"FINAL deſtruction ſeize on all the "world!"——Perhaps, Melmoth, there is not a fellow this moment exiſting ſo compleatly miſerable as I—I have ſucceeded, fatally ſucceeded, with this amiable wretch, and both of us muſt bid adieu to happineſs for ever.

In my laſt letter I told you how this beautiful woman had entirely conquered all my indifference by the ineffable ſweetneſs of her manner; and that I now longed for the day of our marriage with as much impatience as if I had from the firſt been paſſionately ſmitten. The little ſeparation from her after her departure from Bath, gave an inconceiveable ſpur to my inclination;

tion; and the bewitching air of ſoftneſs with which ſhe received me on my going down to her father's, ſo compleatly did the buſineſs, that I wondered at my own ſtupidity in being ſo long inſenſible of her perfections.

The good old people, notwithſtanding they ſeemed highly delighted with my company, nevertheleſs, through an injudicious degree of tenderneſs both to me and their daughter, took every opportunity of leaving us together; naturally enough ſuppoſing that we ſhould be beſt pleaſed to be left to the uninterrupted enjoyment of each other's converſation; after ſupper, particularly, they withdrew to their own apartment ſo early, that Louiſa and I had at leaſt three or four hours to the good before we could reaſonably think of retiring. I need not tell you, Melmoth, that when two young people are left together for

any

any length of time, that ſome familiarities will paſs, though even both are actuated by the beſt inclinations. Would it not, for inſtance, have been ſurprizing if, circumſtanced as I was with Louiſa, I had ſat with her for two or three hours, without ever raviſhing a kiſs, preſuming to ſink upon her neck, or attempt to claſp her in my arms, when ſhe even condeſcendingly acknowledged how tenderly ſhe loved me? Would it not alſo have been equally ſurprizing had ſhe repulſed thoſe little effuſions of tranſport at the very inſtant that they were excited by her own confeſſion; and, in a manner, authorized by the conſideration of the union which was ſo ſhortly to take place? A contrary behaviour would have been as unnatural as it was impoſſible; and virtue neither expected nor required more than the reſtriction of our tranſports within ſome ſenſible bounds.

But

But alas, Melmoth, who can ſtrike a line to the paſſions, or pretend to tell the impetuous tide of youth, "go no "farther than this"—For my own part, as I ſhall anſwer it before God, I never in my life was more diveſted of ſiniſter deſigns—I conſidered Louiſa in quite a different light from any of thoſe women with whom I had formerly trifled; and ſet her down as a lady, whoſe reputation was immediately connected with my own—I ſaw her, beſides, the only daughter of an honourable family, which it would be unpardonable to diſgrace; and the friendſhip which my ſiſter entertained for her, was a circumſtance of itſelf ſufficient to have prevented me even from once thinking about the poſſibility of attaining her upon any terms that were not ſtrictly honourable.

You have often, my dear Melmoth, called me the moſt ſentimental libertine

you ever knew; and once, in a converſation with my ſiſter Haverſham, aſſured her, notwithſtanding all my follies, that I was above laying any unmanly ſchemes for the ſeduction of innocence; in this you did me nothing more than juſtice —You yourſelf know that, in one half of my amours, the advances were ſo palpable on the wrong ſide, that there was no creditable method of getting off, even had I been the moſt ſanctified puritan in the kingdom.—You will, therefore, naturally credit my account, and believe that I am infinitely above any diſingenuous attempts either to palliate or diſguiſe my part in this unfortunate tranſaction.

I had been now a full week down at Louiſa's, and company from various places was impatiently expected to attend at the approaching ſolemnity; when, laſt night, ſhe and I ſitting, as uſual,

to

to enjoy all the delicious nonſenſe, which generally makes up the principal part of love converſations, we happened accidentally to mention a ſuit of night cloaths which ſhe had juſt received from London, and which, ſhe ſaid, became her exceſſively; as I expreſſed a deſire to ſee them on her, ſhe retired immediately to her room, and, in about a quarter of an hour, came down ſo irreſiſtably raviſhing, that I was no longer my own maſter. Imagine to yourſelf, Melmoth, with all your boaſted apathy of diſpoſition, a woman, ſuch as I have repeatedly deſcribed Miſs Mildmay, dreſſed in a flowing robe of white ſattin, with her fine black hair hanging careleſsly down her neck; and every thing in the moſt voluptuous diſorder--Imagine this, I ſay, and tell me honeſtly whether you could have beheld her without emotion?—If you could, you muſt either be ſomething more or leſs than human—For my part I was

mere fleſh and blood—I ſnatched her to my boſom with a phrenzy of the moſt paſſionate admiration, and almoſt ſtifled her with kiſſes—The extatic tenderneſs with which ſhe received my embrace entirely deſtroyed my recollection; and a curſed ſopha lying moſt conveniently ready to aſſiſt the purpoſes of my raſhneſs, I proceeded from liberty to liberty till ſhe was actually undone.

The guilty triumph thus compleated, we were both in an inſtant perfectly ſenſible of our indiſcretion—Louiſa ſtalked to her chair with a mingled air of the moſt fixed aſtoniſhment and diſtreſs, and preſerved a profound ſilence for ſome minutes, till, at laſt, unable to endure the conflict in her boſom any longer, ſhe hid her face in a handkerchief, and gave looſe to a violent flood of tears. For my own part, Melmoth, I was equally tortured by ſhame and regret—for the

firſt time in my life, I felt ſuch a mortification at ſucceeding with a fine woman, that I could not for the ſoul of me ſay a ſyllable of comfort to her. The miſeries which I eaſily foreſaw muſt ariſe from this unfortunate lapſe, crouded at once upon my imagination; ſo that that conqueſt which, at another time, perhaps, would have been the higheſt gratification to my vanity, now ſerved only to wound my ſenſibility, and to fill me with the moſt poignant diſtreſs.

The wretched Louiſa ſtill continuing fixed with her elbows on her knees, her head ſupported by her two hands, and her face covered with her handkerchief; I walked over to her chair in a ſtate of united anguiſh and irreſolution—bleeding for what I ſaw her ſuffer, yet fearing to offer her the ſmalleſt conſolation—However, inſtinctively dropping upon one knee, I begged ſhe would be com-

poſed, and aſſured her that what had happened rather enhanced than leſſened my affection; and that, as I was her huſband in every thing but the ceremony, there was no offence whatſoever committed againſt virtue — Form, I obſerved, was alone what we had violated; and, as the ſecret was entirely confined to ourſelves, there was little occaſion either for confuſion or regret.

We are all of us, my dear Melmoth, ready enough to believe what we wiſh may be true; and poor Louiſa, though ſhe could not be convinced by the force of my reaſonings, nevertheleſs attempted to be chearful; ſhe wiped her charming eyes therefore, and ſeemed delighted at the reſpectful attitude in which ſhe beheld me, for I ſtill continued on my knee, and endeavoured, by all the little tenderneſſes in my power, to raiſe her into

into credit with herſelf—I talked familiarly about the wedding day, called her my wife in the moſt melting accent I could poſſibly aſſume; and, at intervals, took the liberty of chiding her anxiety as an equal doubt of my honour and my love—At laſt, I ſucceeded pretty well in re-aſſuring her: ſhe ventured to look up with an air of ſome confidence, condeſcended to play with my fingers, and even once went ſo far as to honour my hand with her lips—I need ſcarcely inform you what the conſequence was—The tide of paſſion was in an inſtant ſwelled up to the cuſtomary height—and every impulſe of recollection was again ſwept away upon the couch.

Such, Melmoth, is the preſent ſituation of affairs between Louiſa and your unfortunate friend; what to do I know not—You are not to be told how romantically delicate I am in my notions

about women.—It is with me a fixed principle, that the ſame woman who ſuffers even the man ſhe doats upon to diſtraction, to take advantage of an unguarded moment, will have her unguarded moments with other people—Paſſion will, in all probability, often ſupply the want of inclination; and the ſame warmth of conſtitution which originally betrayed her into an indiſcretion with him, is but too likely to make her guilty of indiſcretions with every body elſe. How frequently, Charles, in the keeneſs of appetite, have I, where more agreeable diſhes were not immediately at hand, fallen greedily upon ſuch fare as actually turned my ſtomach when I came to conſider it? Women, like ourſelves, are only fleſh and blood—deſires are as natural to them as to us, and who can take upon him to ſay, when the favourite object of their wiſhes is at any diſtance, but

what

what neceſſity may immediately metamorphoſe a piece of coarſe beef into an abſolute ortolan?

This, you will poſſibly obſerve, is bringing a general charge againſt the ſex, and ſuppoſing that there is no ſuch thing as virtue exiſting in any individual of the whole—An opinion of ſuch a nature is what I am neither baſe enough nor weak enough to adopt—Coxbomb as I may be in ſome reſpects, and greatly as my vanity has been flattered by ſucceſs among the ladies, ſtill I was never one of thoſe fellows who thought the ſex univerſally depraved—On the contrary, I dare ſay there are thouſands who are capable of reſiſting the deepeſt ſubtleties of the moſt plauſible deſign—But where we have ourſelves experienced the frailty of a woman, it is natural enough to form an idea upon what we know; and reaſonable enough

to

to judge, from her behaviour in one or two circumſtances, what her conduct is likely to be in all.

After a declaration of this kind, you may probably imagine that I do not intend marrying Miſs Mildmay, notwithſtanding the treaty has been carried ſo far between the two families; you are, however, much miſtaken. Greatly as this unhappy affair has ſunk her in my opinion, I ſhall nevertheleſs pay a rigid attention to the ſanctity of my word—But though I ſhall behave with juſtice, I ſhall alſo act with candour.—I ſhall inform her how utterly impoſſible it will be for her ever to recover my confidence after what has paſt; and if ſhe is weak enough to accept my hand while I make a poſitive avowal of my contempt, why, ſhe muſt abide by the conſequence.

This morning ſhe came down to breakfaſt with an encreaſed degree of beauty

beauty, if it is poſſible for ſuch beauty to admit of an encreaſe — The delightful conſciouſneſs that flushed upon her cheek, enlighted her complexion into an abſolute blaze of perfection; while the ſpeaking ſenſibility of a down-caſt eye threw ſuch a modeſty over her features, as rendered her the fineſt picture which fancy could conceive of the ſofteſt innocence and love. Her father, charmed with her appearance, turned round to me, and, in a very low whiſper, ſaid, "Ah Harold, you ſee "the ſweetneſs and delicacy of my poor "girl—the day is now ſo near ſhe cannot "look at you with any degree of reſolu-"tion." Unhappy old man! little does he imagine what a looſe all that wonderful ſweetneſs and delicacy can give to the dictates of an unhallowed imagination — Little does he think how ſhe burned in my arms laſt night, and poured out her whole ſoul in the moſt paſſionate ſtorm of a voluptuous inclination. But, alas, Mel-

moth,

moth, why do I harrow up my recollection with that curſed night—it has given me an eternal averſion to the only woman I can ever look upon with tenderneſs; and faſtened all the ſcorpions of an invincible hatred to the boſom of an extravagant love. You can ſcarcely imagine, my dear Melmoth, what I felt at her approach—My indignation was no leſs excited than my tranſport, and I could not help ſaying to myſelf, "how aſto-"niſhingly is that creature calculated to "deceive! This moment, when I know "her ſtained and polluted, what an "angel-like air ſhe aſſumes; as if ut-"terly unconſcious of a blot, and no "leſs unſullied in her mind, than fault-"leſs in her perſon." In reality, Melmoth, the more innocent ſhe ſeems now, the more I have hereafter to apprehend; ſince the ſame air of purity which at preſent varniſhes over the crime I am ſenſible of—may, in future,

ſerve

ſerve to conceal a thouſand, which may be neceſſary for my knowledge, though deſtructive to my felicity—A few hours, however, will determine my fate with regard to Miſs Mildmay: this is Monday; and Saturday next the wedding is to be celebrated; none of the company are yet arrived, ſo that the ſooner matters are brought to an eclairciſſement the better. Dear Melmoth, pity my ſituation, and believe me, with the utmoſt affection,

R. HAROLD.

LETTER

LETTER VII.

Mrs. MILDMAY *to the Right Hon. the Counteſs of* HAVERSHAM.

O LADY Haverſham, what ſhall I do, or where ſhall I go—your inhuman brother has broke my heart—and my unfortunate child, that was once the darling of my age, is now caſt out from the arms of her father, and expoſed as well to the deteſtation as the contempt of all her family. If I can any way ſupport my ſpirits to go through with the ſhocking ſtory you ſhall be acquainted with all—you have fine ſenſe, lady Haverſham; you have great humanity—and can allow for the diſtraction of an unhappy mother, torn in a moment from the enjoyment of all her hopes, and doomed to languiſh out the little remainder of her days in equal wretchedneſs and diſgrace.

Here

Here my poor Mr. Mildmay and I were felicitating each other at the proſpect of an approaching union between our family and your's; and waiting with impatience for the day which was to ſecure our child in the protection of a worthy huſband—Nothing but your preſence, the preſence of our ſon, and the company of a few particular friends, was wanting to complete our happineſs—O that we could have prevailed upon you to accompany your cruel brother down! The irreparable injury which has murdered all our tranquility, had then never happened; and we ſhould now be exulting in felicity, inſtead of ſinking beneath a load of unutterable ſhame and diſtreſs.

I was ſitting in my own parlour this morning, reading my favourite Sherlock upon Death, when Sally, my daughter's maid, ſcreamed out from the top of the ſtairs,

ſtairs, that her miſtreſs was dying. Terrified at this information, as you may naturally imagine, I haſtened to her aſſiſtance, and found the unfortunate girl in a very ſtrong hyſteric, ſtretched upon the floor, and Sally in vain attempting to raiſe her up. By this time, two or three of the other women ſervants, joined us, and we lifted her between us into an arm chair; where, with a great deal of difficulty, ſhe was brought a little to herſelf—She ſcarcely recovered, however, when ſhe fell into another fit; and continued in a courſe of ſucceſſive faintings for ſeveral hours—ſo that I thought it prudent to ſend a chariot, and ſix of our beſt horſes, for doctor Webley. About five o'clock in the evening ſhe became pretty well compoſed, and the exceſſive fatigue ſhe had undergone threw her into a profound ſleep; in which ſhe lay till very near twelve ——During the principal

cipal part of this melancholy ſcene, my poor Mr. Mildmay and I were not five minutes abſent from the room. Her father, you know, doated on her, if poſſible, with a degree of tenderneſs more piercingly ſenſible than myſelf—he hung over her continually, in an agony of ſpeechleſs diſtraction; tore the white hair from his temples, or turned up his eyes towards Heaven, as if he meant to expoſtulate with the Divine Being, for viſiting his daughter with ſuch an affliction, at a time when he looked for nothing but the moſt perfect content. His diſtreſs you may eaſily conclude was a conſiderable aggravation of what I felt for my wretched child; and, though I endeavoured to conſole him, every effort which I made for that purpoſe, rendered me doubly in need of conſolation myſelf. All this time I was totally ignorant of what occaſioned the unhappy girl's diſtreſs; and I tortured my imagination

inceſſantly, with endeavouring to think upon ſome probable cauſe—But judge, lady Haverſham, of my diſtraction, when the poor deluded creature, ſtruck with the anguiſh into which ſhe ſaw us plunged, ſeized the firſt opportunity that her perfect recovery to reaſon ſupplied, of informing me that ſhe was totally unworthy of the leaſt regard; that ſhe had fatally ſacrificed the honour of her family; that Sir Robert Harold was irrecoverably loſt; and that death was the only thing which could poſſibly put a period to her afflictions. In ſhort, the keeneſs of her ſenſibility would not allow her to keep any thing concealed; ſhe let me into the whole ſtory of her guilty intercourſe with your brother—and the agonies into which the horrid diſcovery naturally threw me, ſweeping away every trace of her recollection, ſhe made no ſcruple, in the fullneſs of her ſoul, to mention the cauſe of my agitation

agitation to her father; upbraiding herſelf at the ſame time as the worſt of parricides, who had not only ſhortened my days, but murdered my reputation.

You know my, dear lady Haverſham, how rigidly refined my poor Mr. Mildmay is in every thing which concerns the female delicacy of his family. You know he can ſcarcely allow for the moſt caſual infirmities of human nature in a woman; though he prepoſterouſly thinks the other ſex is entitled to the moſt unlimited indulgence—All his pity, therefore, for his miſerable daughter, was inſtantly turned into an extravagant rage—he ſpurned the wretched girl as ſhe lay at his feet, lamenting her fatal indiſcretion, in language that would pierce a heart of adamant, and imploring his forgiveneſs with all the forcible rhetoric of ſtreaming eyes, a burſting boſom, and a proſtrate ſupplication. In vain did

I kneel with my child, (for, O lady Haverſham, notwithſtanding the greatneſs of her crime, I cannot drive the mother from my heart,) and conjure him, by whatever I thought moſt affecting, to pity her; the more earneſt we were in our ſolicitation, the more inexorable he became in his reſentment, till at laſt, worked up to a phrenſy of indignation, he poured out a moſt barbarous execration on her, and commanded me, in a tone which I never preſumed to diſpute, to ſee the infamous ſtrumpet (that was his cruel word) turned out of the houſe in leſs than an hour, as I either valued his repoſe, or my own tranquility. My own tranquility, lady Haverſham—Alas, I ſhall never know a moment's happineſs more!—My peace of mind is eternally deſtroyed; and, ſo long as I retain the ſenſe of feeling, I muſt be tremblingly alive to the united wounds both of misfortune and diſgrace.

Mr.

Mr. Mildmay, after pronouncing this ſentence on his loſt unhappy daughter, flew out of the room, though it was paſt twelve o'clock at night, though the ſeaſon was remarkably ſevere, and though a moſt violent ſtorm of wind and rain was at that very moment abroad—Nothing could induce him to delay the execution of his commands till morning—Utterly deaf to my remonſtrances, he inſiſted upon expoſing her to all the fury of the elements; and it was with the utmoſt difficulty that I prevailed upon him, at laſt, to let the chariot take her to farmer Wilſon's, at the end of the avenue; in fact, as well as all parental feeling, he ſeemed to put off all common humanity; and to rejoice at the horror of the night in which ſhe was to be driven out, though, but half an hour before, he would have ſhuddered,

—"Leſt the winds of Heaven
"Should viſit her face too roughly"—

O lady Haverſham, how happy are you in a want of children—You have a thouſand times lamented in my hearing that you never had a child—Yet, was it poſſible for you to imagine but the ſmalleſt part of my diſtreſs, you would own the kindneſs of Providence was never more manifeſted than in the refuſal of what you think a bleſſing, and what I experience to be the greateſt of all misfortunes.—But to go on:

The ſeverity which Mr. Mildmay thus relentleſsly exerciſed on his miſerable child, in a great meaſure, ſubdued the reſentment which I myſelf ſhould otherwiſe have entertained againſt her; I could not therefore reſiſt the moſt ample indulgence of maternal tenderneſs, when the moment of ſeparation came on; I preſſed her to my heart with as much cordiality as if ſhe had never offended, and entirely forgot the nature of her fault,

fault, in the apprehenſion of never ſeeing her again. The poor girl was quite unable to ſupport herſelf againſt what ſhe called an exceſs of goodneſs—ſhe fell repeatedly on her knees to kiſs my hands; drenched them with her tears; and departed, leaning on the arm of her Sally, with a deſire that I would forget there ever had been ſuch a creature as herſelf; and a requeſt that I would transfer all the affection which ſhe had ſo ſhamefully diſgraced, to the advancement of her brother's happineſs, and the reſtoration of her father's tranquility.

During the ſhort time allowed us to take leave, we agreed that ſhe ſhould go to her couſin Darnel's in London; as Mrs. Darnel is a very grave woman, and has ſome obligations to our family, which muſt render her additionally ſolicitous about Louiſa's accommodation.—There, if her unhappy lapſe ſhould be

attended with any conſequences, ſhe will be ſure of tenderneſs and ſecrecy. I have packed up all her cloaths and her little ornaments; and, in one of her trunks, ſhall ſend up, unknown to her father, a bank note of five hundred pounds. This will maintain her till I find whether there is a poſſibility of prevailing on Mr. Mildmay to overlook her fault—If, as I much apprehend, a reconcilation with him will be extremely difficult, I muſt make her what remittances I can, as he will never think thoſe entitled to any inſtances of his bounty whom he makes the objects of his reſentment.

Such, my dear lady Haverſham, is the preſent ſituation of your unfortunate friend. Your cruel, your inhuman brother, may, perhaps, triumph in the deſolation which he has occaſioned; and, like the generality of low minded-libertines, imagine that, in proportion as ſhe has

has aggravated the diſtreſſes of a family that ſincerely loved and eſteemed him, he has made a freſh acquiſition to the importance of his character.—You, I know, will heartily ſympathize in our afflictions—You are his ſiſter, but not the abettor of his crimes—and therefore, I am perſuaded, every thing in your power will be done, to procure us the moſt effectual redreſs.

The only redreſs which we can now have, is an inſtant renewal of the late treaty; which your brother ſo cruelly diſturbed. About two hours before I firſt heard of Louiſa's illneſs, it ſeems he rode away from this upon a pretended viſit to the earl of A———; but, as he has never been heard of ſince, I ſuppoſe he is in London by this time, entertaining his diſſolute companions with the deſtruction of poor Louiſa Mildmay. O, lady Haverſham, don't you wonder

that

that, in ſuch a diſtraction of mind, I am able to write with the leaſt method or propriety? The power of recollection, however, is a faculty which is no way enviable in the wretched; and thoſe who have unhappily loſt their peace of mind, ought, in my opinion, to wiſh for an immediate loſs of underſtanding.

Notwithſtanding my indignation at your brother's barbarity, lady Haverſham, I am nevertheleſs ready to overlook every thing which has happened, if he comes down again and re-eſtabliſhes, as far as he yet can, the repoſe of our family—Louiſa I am ſure muſt doat with the moſt extravagant fondneſs on him, or ſhe never could have made ſuch a ſacrifice—her forgiveneſs, therefore, eſpecially if I intereſt myſelf in the affair, is not very difficult to be obtained; and, perhaps, Mr. Mildmay, when he ſees that there is no other courſe to follow,

follow, may be brought to abate a little of his reſentment. My reaſon for being thus anxious for an accommodation of this unhappy affair, is a fear, leſt, when my ſon comes to hear of it, he may take ſome deſperate revenge, which will involve us in new calamities — You know he is brave to a fault, and piques himſelf exceſſively on the dignity of his profeſſion, and the reputation of his family. Should he, therefore, think of calling your brother to an account, I may poſſibly be robbed of both my children, and may have the murder of my daughter's honour inconceivably aggravated by the timeleſs death of my ſon.

The ſame conſideration, lady Haverſham, which renders me anxious for the preſervation of a ſon, muſt naturally influence your conduct for the ſafety of a brother,

brother, even admitting that a perſon of your ladyſhip's well known benevolence ſhould, upon ſo affecting an occaſion, be cold to the dictates of juſtice, or the feelings of humanity. You will conſequently, exert your utmoſt power with your brother to renew the treaty lately carried on, and try all your intereſt with Mr. Mildmay in favour of Louiſa. Who knows, my dear lady Haverſham, but Providence may yet have ſome hours of peace in ſtore for an unhappy mother; and enable her to look once more with chearfulneſs upon her family. This letter have diſpatched by a ſpecial meſſenger, as I wanted to ſend you the jewels, which your brother a few days ago preſented to Louiſa; and which, at parting, the poor girl left with me for that purpoſe. Your ladyſhip's good ſenſe will immediately ſee the propriety of returning them; and, I dare ſay, do me

the

the juſtice to think that I conſider the neceſſity which has occaſioned that return, as the greateſt misfortune that ever yet befel your ladyſhip's

Sincerely devoted,

But unſpeakably afflicted,

HORATIA MILDMAY.

LETTER

LETTER VIII.

Sir ROBERT HAROLD *to* CHARLES MELMOTH, *Esq.*

YOU are no doubt impatient, my dear Charles, from the nature of my laſt letter, to hear in what manner I conducted my explanatory interview with Miſs Mildmay—You cannot, however, be more impatient to hear than I am to tell it; yet, ſomehow, I feel a latent kind of repugnance to enter upon the ſubject, as if I was ſenſible of having acted with a manifeſt impropriety—This latent uneaſineſs you have often called the working of honeſt conſcience, and told me that I might be ſure I had done ſome unjuſtifiable action whenever I found it buſy with my tranquility. I am half afraid, Melmoth, that you are right—This Miſs Mildmay hangs unaccountably upon my heart—and, was I

maſter

maſter of the univerſe, I would give it, either never to have ſeen her, or to throw an everlaſting oblivion upon one curſed tranſaction.

After breakfaſt on Monday morning, Mr. Mildmay withdrew to his ſtudy, and Mrs. Mildmay retired to her reading parlour: Louiſa and I were left alone; and neither of us, for a full half hour, ſpoke a ſingle ſyllable, each expecting the other would begin the converſation—My ſilence, as it was indeed my buſineſs to ſpeak firſt, cutting the poor girl to the heart, ſhe burſt into a flood of tears, and, with ſome difficulty, told me, that ſhe plainly ſaw how much ſhe was leſſened in my eſteem; and that ſhe was ſure, after what had happened, it would be much better to think of breaking off the intended connexion than to carry it on where there was ſo ſmall an expectation of happineſs—To this

this I replied, with an air of tenderneſs, viſibly affected however, that ſhe did the higheſt injuſtice to my love; that I beheld her with more paſſionate admiration than ever, and that nothing could be more idle than to teize herſelf with the indulgence of a fear that had ſo little foundation in probability: I concluded this cold compliment, with a bow upon her hand, that indicated very little or no emotion, though it contained a great deal of reſpect; and, turning to the window with an air of the moſt mortifying unconcern, obſerved that we could ſcarcely hope for any of our expected company while the weather continued ſo uncommonly boiſterous.

Louiſa was a woman of too much ſoul to ſtand againſt the attack of a palpable indifference, however ſpeciouſly gloſſed over with a ſmooth civility; and, indeed, I intended my indifference ſhould be

ſeen

ſeen pretty plainly, as I had no other method of bringing matters to an eccliciſſement with any tolerable degree of propriety—In proportion therefore, as ſhe ſaw me calm and undiſturbed, ſhe very naturally took the alarm; and conſidered all the uſeleſs profeſſions of my good breeding, as ſo many indirect declarations of my diſreſpect. To a fellow of your knowledge, Melmoth, I need not obſerve how extremely we are provoked by a polite ſerenity, where our hearts are deeply intereſted in the iſſue of a debate—Good breeding, where we want to excite the ſtrongeſt emotions, is the moſt aggravating inſult which we can poſſibly meet; becauſe it equally diſappoints our views, and denies us an opportunity of finding fault; conſcious that it would effectually anſwer my purpoſe, I continued it till I had wound up Louiſa to the higheſt pitch of paſſion; and *madamed* her with ſo

profound a degree of veneration, as gave me a ſpeedy occaſion of carrying my deſign into execution.

" Very well, Sir Robert (ſays ſhe as I ſtood playing with a chineſe figure on the chimney-piece *ſo* placid and *ſo* undiſturbed) " You ſee this affair in a " very eaſy light, but ſuffer me to aſſure " you, before things are carried to the " laſt extremity, that if you are actuated by any inſolent motives of pity for " me, and not influenced entirely by a " regard for your own happineſs; far " as matters have unfortunately gone " between us, I am determined to ſtop " where we are — You may perhaps, " render me wretched, but it never ſhall " be in your power to make me contemptible."

The mingled air of dignity and diſtreſs with which the beautiful girl pronounced this

this declaration, went to my very heart —yet that damned, unhappy, facility with which ſhe yielded to my wiſhes, ſtill employ the principal ſhare of my thoughts. I was determined to act agreeable to the reſolution which I had previouſly made, and therefore replied, "that though nothing but the honour "of her hand could poſſibly ſecure my "felicity, nevertheleſs, ſince ſhe ſeemed "ſo deſirous to break off the treaty ſub-"ſiſting between us, I was ready to "make any conceſſion that might be "agreeable to her inclinations, however "repugnant ſuch a conceſſion might be "to my own.

The cool ſarcaſtic humility of this reply, added greatly to her indignation, but no way got the better of her recollection. — "Sir Robert (ſays ſhe) it is "no difficult matter to perceive the "whole extent of your deſign—the

"fatal teſtimony which I have given you
"of my fondneſs, has leſſened me in
"your eſteem; and of courſe render-
"ed you diſinclined to the union
"which was to ſubſiſt between our fa-
"milies: you want, by a cruel ſerenity,
"a ſtabbing politeleſs of behaviour to
"force me into ſuch a refuſal of your
"addreſſes, as may give a colour to
"your contempt. There is no neceſſity
"however, Sir Robert, for running to
"ſo poor, ſo unmanly an artifice—If
"you are in the leaſt deſirous of avoid-
"ing a match with a wretch, whoſe
"partiality for yourſelf has alone
"rendered her culpable, be generous
"and tell her ſo—She is not yet ſo
"utterly loſt to ſentiment, as to ſollicit
"for your compaſſion, ſince it ſeems
"ſhe is to be no longer entitled to your
"love."

Dear

"Dear madam, replied I, moderate a "little of this unneceſſary warmth. What "cauſe, what ground have I given you "for theſe unaccountable ſuppoſitions?"

"Sir Robert," interrupted ſhe, "it "is not altogether ſo eaſy to blind the "eagle-eyed inſpection of a vehement "love—What cauſe, what ground have "you given me for theſe unaccountable "ſuppoſitions?—The moſt ample cauſe, "the moſt indubitable ground.—When "I came down this morning, did not "your eye induſtriouſly avoid mine?— "and all the time of breakfaſt did not "you officiouſly force your converſation "on my father to avoid ſaying a ſyllable "to me?—When we were left alone, "inſtead of entertaining me as you uſed "to do—did not you ſit a whole hour "without ever opening your lips? and "when in the fulneſs of my heart I "took notice of this indifference, did

" not you then come out with your *dear* " *madams*, *your profound veneration*s, " *and your everlaſting eſteems?* Nay, at " this moment, when you ſee my poor " boſom burſting with the moſt poig- " nant diſtreſs at your behaviour; have " you not the ſame unimpaſſioned coun- " tenance, the ſame air of unconcern, " and the ſame cutting diſtance of civi- " lity, which firſt of all gave birth to " my ſuſpicions, as if you triumphed in " your power, and were deſirous of ſee- " ing how far the abuſe of it was able " to plunge me in diſtreſs?"

" Upon my word Miſs Mildmay," replied I, " you put a very ſtrange in- " terpretation upon looks—and I am " infinitely ſorry that any unfortunate " diſpoſition of my features ſhould give " you the ſmalleſt uneaſineſs—I did not, " however, imagine that the uſe of a be-

" coming

" coming reſpect could be conſtrued into
" an offence—

" Reſpect!—Reſpect!" exclaimed ſhe, with a wildneſs of look and elevation of tone, that really ſtartled me. " Reſpect!
" —God give me patience—Inhuman
" Harold—and do you think that a
" woman doating like me to diſtraction,
" can ever put up with a cold un-
" animated reſpect where ſhe has a right
" to demand the warmeſt returns of a
" paſſionate love!—Reſpect, after what
" has paſſed between you and I, is the
" groſſeſt of all inſults—and if you have
" nothing elſe to offer me—I ſcorn both
" you and your reſpect—and here in the
" preſence of the living God, I ſolemnly
" ſwear never to be your's; but will
" rather undergo any load of infamy and
" misfortune, than give my hand to a
" man, who, after having blaſted my peace
" of mind for ever, under the ſpecious

"appearance of the moſt vehement "paſſion, ſhall in a few hours let me "ſee I am ſo much leſſened in his eſti- "mation as to talk of treating me with "politeneſs and reſpect!—Go Sir Ro- "bert Harold" continued ſhe in a gen- tler accent, but with a faltering tone, "go leave me—inſtantly—I here give "you back all your vows and proteſta- "tions—and ſhall only ſay that you "have eternally deſtroyed the happi- "neſs of a poor girl, who would die for "the preſervation of your's."—here the ſtorm found way, for unable any longer to ſuppreſs her emotion, ſhe threw her- ſelf into a great chair, and gave way to a violent flood of tears.

All this time, Melmoth, if you do me juſtice, you muſt be ſenſible that my diſtreſs fell little ſhort of Miſs Mild- may's—You know I have not naturally an obdurate heart, however reaſon and reflection

reflection may on particular occaſions oblige me to reſiſt its emotions—Judge therefore what I muſt have felt, to ſee the woman of my ſoul tortured in a manner, to madneſs, with the coldneſs of my behaviour; yet to ſee alſo an abſolute occaſion for continuing that coldneſs; nay an abſolute occaſion of giving her up for ever —A thouſand times was I ready to throw myſelf at her feet, and ſolicit a reconciliation.—My love, joined to my humanity, pleaded the propriety of ſuch a proceeding in terms the moſt forcible; but my reaſon and my pride ſtept conſtantly in to my aſſiſtance, and convinced me that the anguiſh of a ſeparation at that time, was infinitely preferable to a whole life of deſpicable jealouſy, and aching diſcontent—As well for the poor girl's ſake as my own, I ſaw the indiſpenſable neceſſity of perſevering in my plan; and, as the dignity of her ſentiments had

had made a parting conſiderably more eaſy than I could expect, I exerted all my fortitude to oppoſe the remonſtrances of my love; being fully convinced that to loſe the preſent opportunity would only render a breach more difficult another time, if any other time could even ſupply me with ſo fair an occaſion to break off.

Miſs Mildmay had no ſooner thrown herſelf into the chair, than good manners neceſſarily obliged me to conſole her as well as I was able, I mean conſiſtently with my deſign; I went therefore, to the ſide of the chair, and taking hold of her hand, I raiſed it coldly to my lips, and again begged ſhe would moderate a paſſion, which was wholly founded on miſtake.—"This exceſs of "ſenſibility my dear Miſs Mildmay obſerved I) "is an equal injuſtice to my "ſentiments and your own underſtand-

"ing—

"ing.—The exception which you have
"ſo unfortunately taken to my beha-
"viour this morning, is rather the re-
"ſult of an extraordinary delicacy on
"your part, than the conſequence of
"any impropriety on mine—You ſay
"I am deſirous of diſcontinuing my
"addreſſes, and that you are conſcious
"of being leſſened in my eſteem—How
"cruel, how inequitable a ſuppoſition,
"when I am here impatiently waiting
"for the happy day which is to unite us
"for ever; and ready this inſtant, if you
"really doubt my ſincerity to anticipate
"the wiſhes of the two families by a
"marriage that ſhall ſilence your fears,
"till I am publicly honoured with your
"hand in the preſence of all our rela-
"tions—Tell me, is there any greater
"proof which I can poſſibly give you,
"either of my love or my eſteem: if
"there is, be kind enough to name it;
"for be aſſured I only want to know

"your

" your inclinations, that I may fly to " indulge them."

Though there was nothing extremely paſſionate in this addreſs, Melmoth, nevertheleſs, had I delivered it with any energy of tone or ſignificance of geſture, it might perhaps, have removed Louiſa's anxiety at once, and all might have been immediately accommodated between us; but as I ſpoke it with inconceiveable phlegm, and kept my eye continually wandering round the room; it was impoſſible for her, without a manifeſt deviation from her natural dignity to accept it as an apology; whether ſhe really ſaw into my true motive or not, I ſhall not attempt to determine; but raiſing up her head, and regarding me for ſome time with a look of the moſt earneſt attention, ſhe aſſumed a ſteady articulate tone of voice, and delivered herſelf to the following purport.

" The

" The more Sir Robert that I con-
" ſider the nature of your behaviour, the
" more I am convinced how utterly im-
" proper it is for you and I ever to
" think of uniting.—The recent un-
" happy tranſaction has deſtroyed me
" entirely in your good opinion, and in-
" deed no wonder, for it has entirely
" deſtroyed me in my own. I ſee that
" as a man of faſhionable honour, you
" are ready to fulfil your engagements
" with me; but by the manner in which
" you teſtify this readineſs, I alſo ſee
" that you ſecretly wiſh I ſhould diſ-
" charge you from that obligation—You
" want to provoke me into ſuch an
" exertion of my pride, as muſt force
" me to reject you; and only deſire to
" ſave appearances by drawing that re-
" fuſal from me which muſt otherwiſe
" abſolutely proceed from yourſelf—It
" would however, be much more gene-
" rous if you candidly acknowledged the

" real

" real motives of your behaviour; and " ſince you have fortitude enough to " bear up againſt the pain of a ſepara- " tion, I could wiſh you had ſpirit " enough to avow the deſign; this " method of making me anſwerable for " the conſequences of your own infide- " lity, is no leſs unmanly than it is " unjuſt; but it is below me to upbraid " you—for any claim which I ſhall " make upon your inclinations— be ſa- " tisfied, that if you are willing to be " free, you are ſo."

As ſhe pauſed in this place, I was about to make a reply—but ſhe ſtopped me in the beginning of my ſpeech, and ſaid, " Sir Robert, profeſſions are " idle things when contradicted by the " inconteſtible evidence of facts.—You " have made me miſerable, and you " have made me worthleſs; do not there- " fore by the diſplay of an affected ten-

" derneſs

" derneſs ſeek to load me with an addi-
" tional portion, either of wretchedneſs
" or diſgrace—I am not altogether the
" ſimpleton you take me for; your
" motives I ſaw through from the mo-
" ment you ſpoke upon this ſubject—
" and though you have ſhewn but little
" conſideration for me, during the courſe
" of our debate, I ſhall nevertheleſs
" ſpare you a world of confuſion and
" anxiety—In ſhort, Sir, without put-
" ing you to the trouble of any farther
" arts to break off the treaty between us
" —I again aſſure you in the moſt
" ſolemn manner, that it never ſhall take
" place—And, unhappy as I ſhall freely
" own this reſolution muſt for ſome time
" make me, I nevertheleſs think it not
" a little fortunate that I diſcovered your
" ſentiments before the intended cere-
" mony (by preventing the poſſibility
" a of ſeparation,) had faſtened me to

" a more

" a more laſting, as well as to a more " aggravated diſtreſs."

Here Melmoth, was the end of our altercation. Louiſa, on finiſhing this ſpeech roſe haſtily from her chair, and darting up to her room, as I ſuppoſe, left me to chew the cud of my own reflections, which to ſpeak honeſtly my dear Charles, was none of the moſt agreeable—However, though I was ſecretly pleaſed that ſhe had by a very generous effort of ſoul ſpared me the mortification of being more than paſſive in the courſe of this tranſaction; you cannot think how it affected both my pride and my tenderneſs, to ſee her ſo apparently eaſy upon ſuch a trying occaſion—I imagined it would coſt her ſomething more to give me up for ever; and to the diſgrace of my humanity I muſt own, that it would have no way

diſpleaſed

diſpleaſed me had ſhe ſhewn a little ſtronger ſenſibility in our ſeparation.

Being thus left alone, I rang for Edwards, and ordering him to get the chaiſe ready in an inſtant, I ſet out from Mr. Mildmay's, without taking leave of a ſingle ſoul, leaving only one of the footmen to bring the portmanteau after me, and ordering Ned to diſtribute, agreeable to the inhoſpitable cuſtoms of this country, twenty guineas among the ſervants.

The interval from quitting Mr. Mildmay's till my arrival at Reading, was one of the moſt diſagreeable paſſages in my whole life—Shame and remorſe harrowed up my boſom alternately; and, when I reflected upon what Louiſa was likely to ſuffer, I was tortured to diſtraction. The pitiful figure I made, thus ſtealing away from a houſe, in which, but the day before, I was abſolutely idolized,

gave me the ſevereſt mortification; and, in ſhort, the univerſal diſtreſs which I knew muſt reſult from my behaviour, operated ſo ſtrongly upon my humanity, that I was a thouſand times ready to turn back, with a reſolution of ſacrificing my own peace of mind to preſerve the quiet of my ever amiable ſiſter; the beautiful Louiſa; and her reſpectable family. But when I conſidered what had paſſed; when I conſidered what might probably happen; every thing fell before the arguments of my pride, and I continued invincibly attached to my firſt determination.

O Melmoth, did theſe women but know how we worſhip them for refuſing to gratify our wiſhes—did they but know how me doat upon the indignation of a fine eye, when fired into a blaze of conſcious virtue, and ſtriking an inſtant confuſion upon the

preſumptuous

preſumptuous addreſſes of a deſigning lover; how few of them would liſten to an improper ſolicitation?—But, ridiculouſly confident of their own fortitude; or prepoſterouſly imagining that thoſe conceſſions are moſt like to ſecure an admirer, which are moſt apt to excite his contempt, they conſtantly betray their own cauſe, and oblige him in a manner to deſpiſe and deſert them. But a truce with reflections.

When I came to my inn at Reading, the firſt thing I did was to write a ſhort letter to Mr. Mildmay, thanking him for the many civilities which he had ſhewn me; and informing him that it was with inexpreſſible regret I quitted his houſe, at a time when I fondly flattered myſelf with the hope of ſpeedily becoming ſo near a part of his family; but that, as I had reaſons to believe a union with me, would be no way con-

ducive to the happineſs of his amiable daughter, I had determined to make a ſacrifice of my own felicity, rather than be the leaſt impediment to her's; and concluded with the cuſtomary round of common-place compliments, that tingle very prettily on the ear, though they ſeldom intereſt either the heart or the underſtanding. This letter I diſpatched by Edwards, for two reaſons; becauſe, in the firſt place, a ſpecial meſſenger carried an air of greater reſpect, than if I had ſent it by the poſt; and becauſe, in the ſecond, I knew Edwards would give a ſharp look out, and bring me a pretty exact account of every thing which had happened ſince my departure.

And now, Melmoth, what ſay you to the part which I have acted in this affair? Don't you think my dexterity in getting off a maſterpiece; and my fortitude

titude in reſiſting the importunate remonſtrances of my own heart, an exertion of philoſophy, which is at leaſt equal to any thing in all antiquity? To be ſerious, however, though I think you will in the main approve both of my prudence and my reſolution, I am nevertheleſs fearful of hearing your ſentiments. As to lady Haverſham, I know ſhe will for ſome time be in the pouts, and fancy that I have behaved with the greateſt impropriety; but as there is no likelihood of her ever becoming acquainted with the real cauſe of my proceeding; and as I am conſcious her brother is the perſon on earth who holds the higheſt place in her affections, I am ſatisfied the ſtorm muſt in a little time blow over, and that a few days will reinſtate me perfectly in her eſteem.

Poor Louiſa, was her peace of mind a little eſtabliſhed, I could with the

more chearfulneſs ſubmit to my part of the anxiety; but ſome how her diſtreſs is continually preſent to my imagination, and my own feelings are perpetually aggravated by the recollection of her ſufferings. Women, however, though their ſenſibility may be more piercingly exquiſite than ours, are nevertheleſs much readier to conquer the remembrance of misfortune: they feel more deeply indeed at firſt; but from the oſier-like pliability of their minds, the moment the firſt hurry of the tempeſt is ſuſtained, they gradually riſe to their former ſituation; the anguiſh inperceptibly ſoftens from affliction into melancholy, from melancholy into languor, and from languor into tranquility: whereas, the maſculine mind, like the oak in the fable, is ſhattered in the ſeverity of a conflict, when it might eaſily have recovered the moſt violent ſhock by a happy facility in bending. This remark,

mark, Charles, is not the conſequence of an idle ſpeculation. In the courſe of my own experience, I have frequently found it exiſting in reality: when I firſt commenced life, I have been the moſt uneaſy fellow in the world at the concluſion of an amour, leſt the diſtraction in which I ſaw the unfortunate fair one abſorbed, ſhould force her into ſome deſperate extremity; yet how have I ſtared with aſtoniſhment, when, in the ſhort circle of a few hours, the ſelf ſame miſerable nymph, who was proſtrate at my feet, and tearing her hair with all the phrenſy of an extravagant paſſion, has appeared in the ſide-box, or the drawing-room, with as perfect a compoſure upon her features, as if her tender boſom had never undergone the ſmalleſt agitation? On this account, therefore, I flatter myſelf, that Miſs Mildmay's uneaſineſs will very ſpeedily wear off, eſpecially as her ſecret will reſt in a

manner with herſelf, and as ſhe herſelf alſo has the credit of the rejection.

I ſhall by this day's poſt write to lady Haverſham. That woman, Charles, has a ſoul that ſtrikes againſt the ſtars; and excites, in the midſt of all the brother's familiarity, a ſomething that commands my higheſt admiration. Notwithſtanding all your peculiarities, you are one of her greateſt favourites; call upon her therefore immediately on the receipt of this, and let me as immediately know what ſhe ſays of my breach with Miſs Mildmay. I ſhall ſtay at this place till I receive your anſwer; where I ſhall go next muſt be a matter of farther conſideration; though *where*, would be a matter of no conſequence, as I am heartily weary of myſelf, were it not that I am, in ſpite of all my indifference to the world, your ever faithful

R. HAROLD.

LETTER IX.

Mr. CHARLES MELMOTH, *to Sir* ROBERT HAROLD.

I Do not know how it is, Harold, but, notwithſtanding my general diſregard of women, you have intereſted me ſtrangely in favour of Miſs Mildmay; and this unaccountable delicacy of your's in breaking off with a lady, merely becauſe ſhe has given you the moſt convincing proof of her affection, is what, in my opinion, ſavours conſiderably more of romance than of real underſtanding. To embrace a certain miſery for fear of a misfortune which is never likely to happen, may perhaps, make you the hero of a very pretty novel; but muſt, in actual life, expoſe you to the unremiting ridicule of every body who is truſted with your ſecret: however, as the die

is

is irrecoverably caſt, and as I do not ſee that the generous girl could be prevailed upon to have you, were you even to ſneak back to her father's houſe in as pitiful a manner as you left it, I ſhall throw away as few of my reflections as poſſible, upon a fellow who acts in manifeſt repugnance to the ſentiments both of his reaſon and his honour; and is willing to become a raſcal in the eyes of the wiſe and the worthy, for fear the ignorant or the profligate ſhould ſet him down as a fool.

Agreeable to the deſire of your letter, I had no ſooner looked over the contents than I ſet out to your ſiſter's; but, inſtead of being immediately uſhered up ſtairs, according to cuſtom, the ſervant told me that his lady had been exceſſively ill the whole day, and given orders againſt the admittance of any viſitors: "however, Sir," ſays the honeſt man,

"as

" as it is you, I'll call Mrs. Harper, her " ladyſhip's woman, who will probably " give you a more ſatisfactory anſwer"

Harper accordingly came down to me; and, with a look of mingled grief and impatience, aſked me if you were come to town? I replied in the negative, and enquired, if I might not ſpeak a word or two with her lady. " Yes to " be ſure, Sir, anſwered ſhe, though I " do not believe ſhe would ſee any other " perſon in the kingdom." On this ſhe led me up ſtairs, and there I found your ſiſter with a letter before her, which ſhe afterwards informed me came from Mrs. Mildmay. It was eaſy to ſee that lady Haverſham had been weeping much, her eyes were prodigiouſly ſwelled; and there was an uncommon paleneſs over her whole face, which ſufficiently indicated both indiſpoſition and diſtreſs.

You

You know how little ſhe ſtands upon ceremony with me—ſhe pointed therefore to a chair near her own, and waving with her hand to Harper, as a ſignal to withdraw, ſhe burſt into a violent flood of tears. As I had but too much reaſon to gueſs the cauſe of her perturbation, and was ſenſible that talking in her preſent circumſtances would only add to her affliction, I waited without ever opening my lips till ſhe had ſomewhat recovered herſelf, and was a little able to enter upon a converſation.

After her tears had procured her ſome relief, ſhe turned to me with an air of unſpeakable dejection, and cry'd, "O! Mr. Melmoth, this barbarous bro-"ther will break my heart; he has "planted daggers here (putting her "hand upon her boſom)—but you know "the whole affair I ſuppoſe, as I am

"ſenſible

" ſenſible that, of all his friends, you " poſſeſs the higheſt place in his con- " fidence."

I bowed, and was ſilent.

" What think you, Sir," ſays ſhe " of " this new exploit? Can you ſay any " thing to defend him now? Would to " God that you could! Yet, O! Mr. " Melmoth, an attempt to extenuate " his guilt would no leſs diſgrace your " good ſenſe, than injure your huma- " nity! But tell me, Sir, has he ſent " you an account of particulars, has " he made you acquainted with every " thing?"

I again bowed, and was ſilent.

" And well, Mr. Melmoth," ſays ſhe, " what can we do to ſave his life; to " ſave the honour of the dear unhappy " girl,

" girl, and to reſtore the peace of a " worthy, innocent family?"

I replied, that you were ſtill at Reading, and would remain there for a day or two; that I was convinced nobody had ſo great an influence over you as her ladyſhip; and adviſed her to exert that influence in ſuch a manner as ſhe ſhould judge moſt conducive to thoſe ſalutary purpoſes.

" Ay, but, Sir," interrupted lady Haverſham, " do you know that poor " Miſs Mildmay is turned out of doors; " that ſhe is now a wanderer, an out- " caſt from her father's houſe; and that " her diſgrace muſt inevitably become " public before any letter or meſſage " can poſſibly reach him? Her unhappy " mother ſends me a bleeding account " of particulars. I ſuppoſe, after your " cruel friend had quitted the houſe,

" Miſs

"Miſs Mildmay, between her conſci-
"ouſneſs on account of the paſt, and
"her deſpair on account of the future,
"revealed the whole matter to the ve-
"nerable lady. Here, Mr. Melmoth;
"we keep no ſecrets from you; here
"is Mrs. Mildmay's letter; and, if you
"can read it with dry eyes, you have
"either more philoſophy or leſs feeling
"than I could wiſh any perſon, whom I
"really regard, to poſſeſs."

I took the letter, and ſhall not ſcruple to acknowledge that I cried very heartily at ſeveral of the paſſages. The elevation of ſentiment, which the young lady ſhews in never once attempting to upbraid you, though ſhe had ſuch an undoubted occaſion for reproach, gives me a very favourable idea of her character; and the generoſity of her ſelf-accuſation, is ſuch an argument in ſupport of her candour, as muſt, I think, entirely remove thoſe unmanly appre-

henſions upon which you grounded your rejection.

Though I am by many years the oldeſt man, you know the ſex infinitely better than I, and know alſo better than I what is eſſential to the promotion of your own happineſs; yet, in the preſent caſe, my dear Harold, I think you exceſſively in fault. Through the whole of Miſs Mildmay's behaviour, there has been much tenderneſs, but no levity; and her error was an exceſs of love, not a vehemence of conſtitution: had it been the latter, like the generality of women, ſhe would have kept her ſecret to herſelf; or meanly crouched under your indignities, in ſuch a manner as had prevented the likelihood of a ſeparation; but ſtill alive to the ſharpeſt nicety of ſentiment, ſhe neither could ſtoop to put up with an inſult to retain you; nor, when a ſeparation took place, attempt

tempt to conceal, by any duplicity of conduct, the fatal occaſion of her loſs. In whatſoever light I view her conduct, I ſee a woman of exalted principle, though I find that woman unhappily in love, and in love with a fellow too, who, inſtead of making any allowances on account of her paſſion, makes uſe of that very paſſion as an argument for involving her in equal diſtreſs and diſgrace.

I have here, at lady Haverſham's requeſt, encloſed Mrs. Mildmay's letter; as your ſiſter is, in conſequence of this unhappy affair, ſo very much indiſpoſed, that ſhe doubts her own ability to write to day; ſhe has charged me, however, in her name, to tell you, that, with all her tenderneſs for you, if you give up Miſs Mildmay, you muſt give up her alſo: ſhe conſiders herſelf as a partner in the injury, which that unfortunate

young lady has ſuſtained; and is, beſides apprehenſive of thoſe conſequences which naturally reſult from the diſhonour of a conſiderable family—You underſtand me—Colonel Mildmay and you, muſt inevitably have a meeting; and though I know you as ſucceſsful in in your weapons, and am ſenſible you have as much courage, as any man in England, it muſt nevertheleſs be a diſagreeable circumſtance to a man of your ſenſibility, to expoſe Mr. Mildmay's houſe to freſh misfortunes; when the injury which you have already done it, exceeds the power of reparation.

Before matters, therefore, come to extremities, I could wiſh, for your own ſake, for your ſiſter's ſake, for my ſake, for every body's ſake, you would inſtantly come up to London, and endeavour at a reconciliation with Miſs Mildmay: a woman who loves you to diſtraction,

ſtraction, can ſcarcely refuſe you a pardon for any offence, eſpecially as the grant of that pardon will be an eſſential means of promoting her own happineſs, and preſerving the honour of her family. You ſee, by her mother's letter, where ſhe is to be; and, if you have either a paſſion for her, an affection for your ſiſter, a friendſhip for me, or a regard for yourſelf, you will immediately comply with ſo reaſonable a requeſt.

Were we to weigh the force of your preſent objection to Miſs Mildmay in a proper ſcale, it would appear ſo aſtoniſhingly trifling, that you yourſelf muſt wonder how you ever gave it any conſideration. You are only *fearful* of being miſerable, you ſay, if you marry Miſs Mildmay; yet you prefer the real miſery of giving her up, and involving the beſt of ſiſter's, and a whole innocent family, in the utmoſt diſtreſs, rather than run the

chance of an imaginary misfortune: is this a proceeding conſiſtent with that good ſenſe, which, in ſpite of all your faults, I muſt allow you; putting even every motive of generoſity, friendſhip, and humanity entirely out of the queſtion? Indeed, Sir Robert, the anſwer is greatly to your diſadvantage; and, was I leſs acquainted with the extent of your abilities, I ſhould be apt to form ſuch opinions as would do no great credit to your underſtanding.

I had almoſt forgot to inform you, that Mrs. Mildmay has ſent up the jewels which you preſented to her amiable daughter, when there was ſuch a likelihood of a happy union between the two families — your ſiſter actually ſobbed when ſhe mentioned them; and, in my hearing, ordered Harper to lock them up in ſome place where ſhe might never have an opportunity of ſeeing them.

This letter, my dear Harold, is very long and very dull; but the anxiety in which I labour on your account, and the long train of evils which I foreſee, ſhould you fooliſhly neglect the advice which I have here given you, totally incapacitates me from attending either to method or connection; but what have I to do with method or connection in letters of friendſhip? Thoſe who write only from the head, regard the beauty of compoſition; while thoſe who ſpeak from the heart, are utterly unmindful of ornament. Believe me therefore to be

Your very faithful

C. MELMOTH.

LETTER X.

Lady HAVERSHAM *to Sir* ROBERT HAROLD.

I DO not know in what form to begin a letter, where I heartily deſpiſe the the perſon to whom I write; nor how to think of calling any body by the tender name of brother, whom reaſon and juſtice oblige me to deteſt as a man; yet the powerful voice of nature ſubdues both my contempt and my indignation, and leads me on to try what can poſſibly be done to preſerve his life and his character, before a publication of his infamy expoſes him to inevitable danger and diſgrace.

Do not imagine, Sir, that, by inſinuating an apprehenſion about your perſonal ſafety, I want to intimidate you into the practice

practice of honour or humanity. I know too well, from the many broils in which you have been already engaged on account of your profligacy, that a man of violence receives additional courage from the appearance of danger; and frequently thinks himself obliged to silence every dictate both of reason and justice, lest his bravery should suffer the smallest imputation; such a man I know you to be; and am satisfied that, in the present case, you will sooner think of justifying the infamy of your conduct, than dream of reparation; yet, Bob, by all the tenderness of our near relation, I conjure you to hear me this once with attention, as it is probably the last time I shall ever trouble you with my censures, or insult you with my advice.

And tell we really, is it thus I am to be repaid for all my solicitude about your happiness? Is the family I most valued,

to be diſhonoured — the young lady whom I moſt loved, to be deſtroyed— and my own peace of mind to be eternally ſacrificed, becauſe I have, with an anxiety which few ſiſters ever felt to ſuch a degree, been attentive to the minuteſt circumſtance that could either improve your fortune, or encreaſe your felicity? Is the ſiſter, for whom you profeſs ſo cordial an affection, the chief perſon marked out for the exerciſe of your cruelty; and the friends who were deareſt to her in the world, the principal people whom you could think of loading with the moſt aggravating diſhonour, and the moſt piercing diſtreſs? O! Bob—could I have thought this of you!—Wild as I judged you in general, I believed you a man of ſentiment at bottom, and could by no means ſuppoſe that, in the unſuſpecting hour of confidence, when the reputation of a conſiderable houſe, and my tranquility, were

at

at ſtake, that you would prove the worſt of all aſſaſſins, and ſtab them both to the heart. The day after to-morrow, Bob, I had ſet apart as the moſt fortunate of my life; but, alas! I am now to mark it only with my tears, and to lament it as the primary ſource of all my preſent afflictions.

Your friend, Mr. Melmoth, has juſt left me; and, though I believ'd I ſhould not be able to write in the aggravated diſtreſs of a real indiſpoſition, and an unexpected calamity; nevertheleſs my heart is too full to be ſilent; and, when I conſider not only what has happened but what is likely to reſult from this melancholy affair, I am fearful of loſing a ſingle moment till I try whether there may be not yet a poſſibility of bringing an accommodation about, and preventing the preſent misfortune from producing any additional cauſe of diſtreſs.

Mr.

Mr. Melmoth, who loves you with the moſt friendly affection, has ſhewn me what you wrote to him in conſequence of this unhappy affair; and I find, that, notwithſtanding the infamy of your conduct on one ſide of the queſtion, you are yet candid enough on the other, to aim at no palliations. I am pleaſed to ſee you generous, though I bleed to find you guilty; and am ſtill in hopes that this latent ember of principle may be fanned into ſomething that will yet light us on to happineſs.

In the whole courſe of your narrative you have but one objection to Miſs Mildmay, and that is even grounded upon a ſuppoſition no leſs ungenerous than unjuſt. You men, however, have very contracted notions on theſe occaſions; and generally give up that very vanity, where a lady has ſhewn any fatal proofs of her regard, which firſt of all

leads

leads you to think of gaining her affections. As long as ſhe keeps you at a diſtance you think yourſelves the only objects whom ſhe can ever honour with her approbation; but if, in the ungarded fulneſs of heart, ſhe ſhould unfortunately loſe ſight of her circumſpection, and ſacrifice her honour through an extravagant tenderneſs, that moment you ſink in your own opinion; that moment you conſtrue what is the conſequence of an unbounded partiality for yourſelves, into a levity of ſentiment, and imagine every body elſe muſt be indulged with an equal degree of familiarity.

You, brother, who have ſo fine a perſon, and ſo finiſhed an addreſs, would think it ſtrange if any body was to tell you, with a grave face, that you were utterly unable to engage a lady's affections; yet why may not you ſuppoſe that it was the influence which you had

over

over Miſs Mildmay's heart, that drew her into this unhappy miſtake—Had ſhe been actuated by any illiberal levity of ſentiment, do you imagine that ſhe would have continued, through the moſt trying ſtages of a young woman's life, from ſixteen up to twenty-one, without making any lapſe injurious to her reputation? Do you ſuppoſe that, ſurrounded with admirers, and every day ſolicited by ſome of the fineſt young fellows in the kingdom, ſhe would not have fallen a victim to a vehemence of conſtitution? Undoubtedly ſhe would; but conſtitution had nothing at all to do in her character. You know I have been intimate in her family from her infancy, though you became acquainted with her ſo lately; and my reſidence, during lord Haverſham's life, upon the very ſpot with her, gave me numberleſs opportunities of knowing her thoroughly—In all this time, there never was a young

lady

lady who behaved with a nicer rectitude of conduct, that had ſo many admirers; and you may be ſure, if I had not the beſt opinion in the world, both of her head and her heart, I ſhould not have been ſo deſirous of having her for a ſiſter.

So far, in reality, was Miſs Mildmay from an indiſcreet girl, that I place no inconſiderable ſhare of her ruin down to the account of her virtue. When ſhe grew old enough to be diſtinguiſhed by the addreſſes of the men, ſhe always made me her confidant; and often, upon my aſking her what objection ſhe could have to ſuch or ſuch a perſon, ſhe would reply, "My dear lady Haver-"ſham, the men are well enough to be "ſure, and ſo are their eſtates; but I "don't find any thing peculiarly ſtriking "in their characters."

As it was impoſſible but what, in the courſe of our intimacy, I ſhould frequently talk of you, and dwell, with all the partiality of a ſiſter, upon ſuch of your actions as I thought worthy of approbation; Louiſa would liſten with a fixed attention; would declare you were a charming fellow; and wiſh that her papa could be prevailed upon to truſt her up with me to town, or that the wildneſs of your diſpoſition would permit you to make a viſit to the country—She longed, ſhe ſaid, to ſee you, and begged I would contrive to bring you together; but I don't know how it was, though I tried ſeveral times, ſome accident or other ſtill happened to defeat my intentions. Matters went on in this manner for ſome time, till the very generous part which you acted by farmer Jenkins, who had been thrown into goal for a conſiderable ſum by his landlord, on account of reſenting an unbecoming

coming liberty with his daughter. As I was really charmed with the action myſelf, I told it to every body, and firſt of all I believe to Louiſa; when ſhe heard that you were totally unintereſted in the affair, that Jenkins was an honeſt worthy poor man; that he had a large family, and was cruelly oppreſſed; when ſhe heard that you not only paid all his debts, but even portioned out his daughter, and all this without being ever ſeen by any individual of the poor fellow's family; Louiſa could not withſtand her emotion—She breathed ſhort; ſhifted from one ſide of her ſeat to the other; and, at laſt, exclaiming that there was no poſſibility of bearing any more, ſhe burſt into a flood of tears. Thus totally uninfluenced by paſſion or prejudice, and entirely actuated by real principle and genuine benignity, her very goodneſs of heart became a material ſource of her misfortunes; and laid the

original

original foundation of all her preſent diſhonour and diſtreſs. The contracted eye of a narrow-minded libertiniſm cannot, however, diſtinguiſh between thoſe indiſcretions which reſult from an exceſs of tenderneſs, and an exceſs of levity; attentive to one little object it always ſees a woman's actions on the leaſt favourable ſide; and, conſcious of its own unworthineſs, ſuppoſes that nothing but an equal unworthineſs can ever honour it ſo far as to commit a capital miſtake.

But, of all the paltry contrivances which were ever deſigned to break off a match, ſurely your mode of parting with Miſs Mildmay was the moſt ridiculouſly contemptible — And ſo you thought it perfectly ſufficient to *ſay* you were ready to marry her, at the ſame time that by the inſolence and cruelty of your artificial humility and concern, you forced her to the abſolute neceſſity of rejecting

rejecting you. As a man of honour you thought it requiſite to declare a willingneſs to fulfil your former engagements; yet what honourable compunction did you feel, when, in the baſeſt oppoſition to your profeſſions, you worked the unhappy young lady up to the cutting alternative, either of refuſing you, or of meriting to be refuſed herſelf? What ſignifies the plauſibility of the moſt ſolemn profeſſion, when our actions give the lye to our words; or what ſignifies the deepeſt air of tenderneſs and veneration, if we ſecretly carry a dagger to ſtab the object of all this tenderneſs and veneration to the heart? In fact, our hypocriſy, ſo far from alleviating the guilt, ſerves only to encreaſe its infamy; and indicates nothing more than our fear, or our ſhame, to perpetrate thoſe crimes from which we are are neither detered by the voice of honour nor the ſenſe of humanity: but what has a

modern fine gentleman to do with honour or humanity! the mere outſides of either are ſufficient for his purpoſe; and, ſo he obſerves a formal, frigid ſort of deference for his word, he becomes equally dead to the ſuggeſtions of his reaſon and the feelings of his heart.

Yet if I am aſtoniſhed at the pitiful contrivance by which you obtained your *honourable* diſcharge from Louiſa, what muſt I think of that barbarous mortification which you expreſs at finding ſhe could bear the loſs of a worthleſs libertine, with ſuch an exalted ſhare of fortitude? And ſo your pride was wounded becauſe the unhappy young lady did not diſcover a greater ſhare of wretchedneſs, and manifeſt a much keener ſenſibility of diſtreſs?—O! Bob, Bob, how unmanly, how inhuman is this declaration! But why am I ſurprized at partial unmanlineſſes, or particular inhumanities, where the

the whole conduct has been uniformly deſtitute of manhood and humanity. Your behaviour, Sir, is entirely of a piece; and my contempt is as much excited by your pride as my deteſtation is raiſed by your barbarity.

I ſuppoſe, Sir, it would have yielded a moſt delicious feaſt to your vanity, had Miſs Mildmay fallen at your feet; and, in an agony of deſpair, implored you to change your cruel reſolution. I ſuppoſe you would have felt the moſt exquiſite gratification to ſee the unhappy young lady deluged in her own tears, and tearing her fine face in all the extravagance of united grief and diſtraction—Thank God, you were diſappointed—Thank God, there is one woman who can ſpurn a worthleſs lover from her preſence, even while ſhe acknowledges his poſſeſſion of her heart. What you may think of the behaviour I know not,

but, for my own part, her conduct ſince her firſt indiſcretion has actually raiſed her in my opinion; and the generous ſenſibility which ſhe has ſhewn in conſequence of her error, gives her a preference to millions who have never erred at all.

Pride, inſenſibility, and want of ſolicitation, have given a negative degree of excellence to, and preſerved the purity of numbers, who were neither protected by principle nor reaſon; but a woman, who, on the eve of marriage with a man ſhe paſſionately loves; a woman, whoſe heart, by the conſideration of the approaching union, and the exchange of a thouſand tender vows that naturally antecede the ceremony, is melted into the ſofteſt degree of confidence, and thrown totally off its guard; ſuch a woman, I ſay, if, in the unſuſpecting moment of her ſoul, ſhe even forgets

the

the more rigid, though neceſſary, punctilioes of behaviour, has infinite extenuations to offer in her defence: but if, upon her recovery of recollection, ſhe is capable of acting with dignity and ſentiment, the goodneſs of her mind I think ſufficiently removes the imputation of levity, and renders her greatly ſuperior to thoſe who boaſt of their own fortitude, without experiencing the force of the ſame temptation.

Thus, my dear Bob, have I opened my whole heart to you on this ſubject; and, now the only anſwer which I either deſire or expect to this letter is, your immediate preſence in town, to try every poſſible means of a reconciliation with Miſs Mildmay — Don't be afraid of looking mean when you are about the performance of a good action; a bluſh upon ſuch an occaſion will become you mightily; and even in proportion to the

greatneſs of your confuſion I ſhall be apt to eſtimate both the benevolence of your heart, and the depth of your underſtanding: ſhould you, however, ſtill continue attached to your ridiculous delicacy, and, through a romantic principle of pride give up a woman who is in actual poſſeſſion of your heart, you muſt alſo give up a ſiſter who loves you as ſiſter, perhaps, never loved brother before; for, though I candidly own it will give me the greateſt of all diſtreſſes to diſcontinue ſuch a correſpondence as ſhould ſubſiſt betweeen two people ſo united by blood, and ſo cemented by friendſhip; yet I poſitively repeat, that, unleſs you ſhew yourſelf a man of principle on this important occaſion, you will never more hear a ſyllable from your greatly afflicted, yet ſtill affectionate Siſter,

THEO. HAVERSHAM.

LETTER XI.

Sir ROBERT HAROLD *to* CHARLES MELMOTH, *Esq.*

Dear CHARLES,

YOU can ſcarcely conceive the anxiety I have laboured under ſince my laſt letter: every moment that I was abſent from Louiſa, I thought would have enabled me to baniſh her from my memory with more readineſs and certainty; but, I don't know how it is, ſhe preſſes with an inceſſant violence to my recollection, and gains every moment an additional ſhare of power in proportion as I flattered myſelf her power would have diminiſhed. What an unaccountable fellow am I, Charles, that I never know my own mind for four and twenty hours together! Before I was ſure of Miſs Mildmay, I was impatient to

become maſter of her affections: when I had obtained theſe affections, I inſtantly ſunk into a ſtate of indifference and apathy; and for ſome time, dreaded the day of marriage as a condemned criminal would dread the day of execucution. Well, having at laſt worked myſelf up into a real paſſion for her, the intervention of an unexpected circumſtance; induced me to give her up and, now that I have given her up, I find I ſhall be as eager as ever to regain her. The only way I ſee, after all, is fairly to marry her; for then, let me change my mind never ſo often, my perſon you know will be bound in ſuch a manner as to keep me from the commiſſion of freſh abſurdities.

I have juſt this moment received your letter, and my ſiſter Haverſham's. By theſe I find you are endeavouring to imitate, as far as you are capable of imitating,

tating any thing worthy, the character of Belford in Richardſon's Clariſſa Harlow—Nay, to render this imitation the more ſtriking, you treat me as if I were juſt ſuch another contemptible blockhead as Lovelace, who did not imagine there was a modeſt woman exiſting. Now, you know very well, Melmoth, that I am rather vain in affectation than in reality; and, tho' I ſometimes talk away about my perſon, and my addreſs, you muſt acknowledge that, unlike Richardſon's hero, I never inſinuate that either is irreſiſtable. In ſhort, you know that, even in my wildeſt connection with the ſex, I ſtill retained ſome degree of principle; and have frequently, from motives of humanity, avoided an intercourſe which he would have ſolicited with the utmoſt aſſiduity. Between him and I the compariſon is ſtill more remote, for he was continually endeavouring to undermine a virtue which he had no reaſon

reaſon whatſoever to ſuſpect; whereas I never entertained a thought injurious to Miſs Mildmay, but ſucceeded with her entirely from a trivial accident.—This is not all; the arts which Lovelace made uſe of to trepan Clariſſa, were to the laſt degree infamous and unmanly; his carrying her to Sinclair's, a common brothel, and his introduction of the two ſtrumpets to her in the character of ladies of quality, are more flagrant inſtances of turpitude than if he had actually adminiſtered a ſleeping draught, or forced her, the moment he got her from her father's. In the latter caſes, youth and paſſion might afford his crime ſome ſhadow of palliation; whereas, in the former, his ſchemes are ſo tedious and refined, that they become utterly repugnant to the fire of youth, and the fury of paſſion; and indicate either the moſt palpable villiany of heart, or the moſt palpable want of inclination.

His

His reaſon too for delaying to marry the woman he loves is a pleaſant one; he fears ſhe is actually virtuous. O! Charles, how oppoſite is the motive of my conduct; but huſh, recollection! down buſy devil, down—I have waked a ſcorpion in that retroſpect, which ſtings me to diſtraction.

Your letter, Charles, is, as you juſtly call it, a very dull one; however, you are a happy fellow to make even your ſtupidity a means of ſhewing your underſtanding. My ſiſter Haverſham, without the advantage of your extenſive erudition, writes fifty times more to the purpoſe, though I dare ſay you think her infinitely your inferior, both as to elegance of ſtile and energy of argument. Don't, however, be offended at the juſtice I do her in this place, for you are a mighty favourite with her lady-

ſhip;

ſhip; and, I dare ſay, may, in time, aſpire at a match with her—Abigail Harper.

Notwithſtanding theſe attempts to be merry, I am fearful my endeavours at a joke will be to the full as unfortunate as your endeavours at letter-writing. I ſhall not, like you, however, make the ridiculous parade of an apology: the buſineſs of this ſcrawl is to beg you will inſtantly go to lady Haverſham's, and inform her I am every thing ſhe could wiſh me—that I ſhall ſet off to-morrow morning for London, and be with her by breakfaſt. In the mean time, if ſhe would contrive to ſee Louiſa, who muſt be in town by this, it would oblige me highly, as I know an interview between them would pave the readieſt way to a reconciliation. Perhaps, Miſs Mildmay, when ſhe finds my ſiſter ſo ſtrenuous, and ſees how ready I am myſelf to heal this unlucky breach, may give herſelf

ſome

ſome airs, and think of treating me with indifference—If ſhe ſhould, by Heaven —Yet, ſurely, I have deſerved not only her indifference, but her ſcorn; have I not cruelly expoſed her to the ridicule of the whole world, and the reſentment of her whole family! — Have I not equally endangered her reputation and her life, deſtroyed her fortune, and blaſted her felicity!—Yes, Melmoth, I have deſerved not only her ſcorn but her abſolute deteteſtation. I am aſtoniſhed, when I review the ſtate of the caſe, how I could be weak enough to prefer a number of the moſt affecting evils, to the precarious hazard at worſt of a ſingle misfortune. Mrs. Mildmay's letter coſt me many tears; and I could not read lady Haverſham's without an equal mixture of ſhame and diſtreſs; that worthieſt, nobleſt of women, Charles, is entitled to every return both of my gratitude and affection; had it not been

for

for her indefatigable induſtry, even in oppoſition to the manifeſt call of her intereſt, and the dictates of her love, my father you know, would have diſinherited me. Her marriage with lord Haverſham, a man three times older than herſelf, was the price of my pardon; and yet, at the ſame time that Theodoſia yielded to this match for my preſervation, I knew her whole ſoul was devoted to my old friend Sir Edward Wilmington. Poor Sir Edward fell in the glorious affair of Minden; and, though I never hinted the circumſtance to you before, yet he ſacrificed himſelf on that memorable day, by running into unneceſſary dangers merely through his incapacity to ſurvive the loſs of my ſiſter—And does not this ſiſter, Melmoth, deſerve every thing at my hands?— Go inſtantly to her, when you read this, and tell her, that, for the remainder of my days, I ſhall be entirely guided by her directions; tell her, that, without

without the continuation of her friendſhip, I never can be happy; and, that next to the forgiveneſs of the Deity himſelf, her's is the moſt eſſential requiſite to my felicity. I bluſh, Melmoth, to be outdone in generoſity; but this exalted woman always threw me at a diſtance; and, from my infancy up, continually excited both my envy and my admiration. You ſee, that, in all this readineſs of acquieſcence, Charles, I never once inſinuate the pleaſure it will neceſſarily give myſelf to make up matters with Louiſa; nevertheleſs, my heart is tranſported at the thought, and I even love my friends the better for thus taking part againſt my pride, in favour of my inclination.

The hints which you inſinuate relative to conſequences, Charles, in caſe I do not accommodate with the Mildmay family, would give me but little uneaſineſs,

eaſineſs, was I ever ſo pitiful a paltroon, and ever ſo much diſinclined to the match. Colonel Mildmay is a young fellow of ſpirit, but he is alſo a man of underſtanding; he muſt therefore ſee how prepoſterous it would be to think of revenging the quarrel of a ſiſter, who, notwithſtanding my behaviour, would, I dare ſay, be much better pleaſed at his fall than mine; I have been more than once challenged by the brothers of young ladies, Charles; and I always found the dear girls thought the fellows extremely impertinent who preſumed to call me to an account. There are few ſiſters, Melmoth, like lady Haverſham; on the contrary, moſt women would much ſooner wiſh to ſee a brother ſtretched dead upon the field of combat, than to hear that an infamous raſcal, who had deſtroyed both their peace and their reputation, had met with the ſmalleſt accident. For my

own

own part, dearly as I love lady Haverſham, was it poſſible for her to be ruined and deſerted, I ſhould never think of calling the villain to an account—After the laſt intimacy, a woman always eſpouſes the cauſe of her lover, and a brother has of courſe little occaſion to interfere, when, at the very moment he is hazarding his life in the cauſe of a ſiſter, ſhe is ſecretly praying for the ſucceſs of his antagoniſt. Colonel Mildmay knows the world, and will never dream of expoſing his life in a quarrel where there is no probability even of meeting with thanks. Be eaſy therefore, dear Charles, on this head, and believe me to be your's unalterably.

ROBERT HAROLD.

LETTER XII.

Sir ROBERT HAROLD *to* CHARLES MELMOTH, *Esq.*

BRISTOL.

Dear CHARLES,

YOU will undoubtedly be ſurprized, (after reading the firm reſolution which I made in my laſt, of going inſtantly to London, and accommodating the unhappy affair with Miſs Mildmay,) to hear that, inſtead of following that reſolution, I am this moment preparing to quit the kingdom; and ſhall, in all probability, never more ſee Louiſa's face, nor ſet a foot in England. O! Charles, to what a fate am I reſerved; one misfortune treads faſt upon the heels of another; and the worthy, though miſguided, colonel Mildmay, is perhaps, by this

this time, dead through a raſh indignation at the fate of his ſiſter.

I was juſt ſtepping into my chaiſe at the Crown in Reading, when a gentleman in a poſt-chariot and ſix, who was driving at a furious rate, accidentally ſeeing me, ordered his people to ſtop; and coming out of the carriage ſlapped me familiary upon the ſhoulder, and expreſſed no little aſtoniſhment at ſeeing me in Reading; ſaying, he thought I had been conſiderably better employed than in driving round the country. The meeting was an unluckily one, Charles, for the gentleman was no other than colonel Mildmay; he was going down to his father's to be preſent at my marriage with Louiſa, and now deſired me to ſtep into his carriage, as it would be much more agreeable to ride together than to travel in ſeparate vehicles.

You may be ſure, that, if the unexpected appearance of the colonel diſconcerted me at firſt, my confuſion was no way abated by the propoſal of accompanying him to his father's; I was exceſſively aukward, and made ſome ſtammering ſort of a reply, which I fancy rendered me curſedly contemptible. The colonel perceiving me ſo much embarraſſed, demanded, with a faltering tone, and a look of the utmoſt apprehenſion, if all was right, and if I ſtill continued on a proper footing with Louiſa. This queſtion was a home one, Melmoth; and to evade it would have been the loweſt degree of timidity; I therefore hinted, that a little acccident had intervened, which muſt neceſſarily occaſion a ſhort procraſtination of our nuptials, but that I had no doubt of every thing's being ſettled to the mutual ſatisfaction of both families.

This

This reply threw the colonel into the greateſt conſternation; his brows were in an inſtant ſtretched a full inch above their natural ſituation; his eyes were fixed into a ſtare of unutterable aſtoniſhment; his mouth inſenſibly widened to a horror of diſtention; and his complexion, which the moment before was remarkably glowing, now aſſumed a white of the moſt deadly kind imaginable; at laſt, with an accent ſcarce audible, while a tear imperceptibly ſtole down his cheek, he deſired me to ſtep into the inn with him, and inſinuated that he expected to be made acquainted with the particulars: I accordingly aſſented to his propoſal; and a private room being ordered, we went up ſtairs together, and for ſome moments ſat in a ſtate of ſilent anxiety, each expecting that the other would open firſt, while each nevertheleſs dreaded to enter upon a converſation.

The colonel, however, finding that I was no way likely to begin the diſcourſe, and naturally recollecting that, as he had been the propoſer of the intended explanation, it became him to break ſilence, he exclaimed with an interrogatory repetition, "And ſo, Sir "Robert, an affair has happened, which "muſt inevitably delay your marriage "with Louiſa?" —— "Yes, colonel, "and I ſincerely lament the occaſion "of that delay, as I flattered myſelf "with a hope of being the happieſt "man in the world a little earlier." "As you are kind enough to lament the "occaſion of this delay," replied the colonel, "you can have no objection "to make me acquainted with it—Shall "I therefore beg, Sir Robert, to know "the real motive of procraſtinating "matters? From the very great expedi-"tion uſed in the former part of this "negotiation, a delay was what I little

"looked

"looked for, and muſt confeſs that it "not only ſurprizes but affects me— "Louiſa, Sir Robert, is very near my "heart, and our's is a family which "muſt not be inſulted with impunity."

You may naturally imagine, Charles, that this menacing ſpeech, together with the air which accompanied it, was not at all calculated to work upon a temper like mine; I therefore ſurveyed the colonel with a look of cold indifference, and anſwered, that Louiſa was to the full as cloſe to my heart as ſhe could poſſibly be to his; and as for reſenting any inſult which might be offered to the honour of his family, that was a circumſtance which muſt raiſe him in every body's conſideration.

From the viſible coldneſs of my reply, the colonel, I ſaw, endeavoured to rein in his temper, as well as he was

able, till he had more ſubſtantial grounds for indicating a reſentment. "Sir "Robert," ſays he, "excuſe my warmth "— I love my ſiſter, and I feel for my "family—gratify my impatience there-"fore in one word, and, like the man "of honour I believe you to be, like "the brother I hope to find you, tell "me that neither has been injured by "your means and I ſhall be the happieſt "man in the univerſe."

Here, Melmoth, was a lunge which required all my ingenuity to parry; yet, when I conſidered that Louiſa herſelf had publiſhed every thing between us, and when I ſaw the colonel muſt neceſſarily hear the whole ſtory in the moſt aggravating light in a few hours, I thought it would look like the rankeſt cowardice to prevaricate, however it might wound my ſenſibility in the tendereſt part to make mention

of

of any thing to the diſadvantage of Louiſa. Putting therefore the beſt face I poſſibly could upon the matter, I candidly told the colonel, that the exceſs of my paſſion for his ſiſter had actually led me into an indiſcretion which occaſioned ſome uneaſineſs; that Louiſa had, in conſequence, been ſent up to London, and that I was then on my journey after her, to fall at her feet, and to ſolicit a reconciliation.—I added, that I flattered myſelf he would exert his intereſt in my favour, ſince there was no undoing what was done; and ſince that was the only means of reſtoring his ſiſter's tranquility, and ſecuring the honour of his family.

There is no poſſibility, Melmoth, of painting the aſtoniſhment in which this relation threw the colonel; the ſurprize which he before manifeſted was nothing to that which now took the entire poſ-

ſeſſion

ſeſſion of his countenance—At length, his wonder giving way to his indignation, a kind of fury ſeemed to flaſh from his eyes, and he fiercely leaned acroſs the table, repeating, in a menacing accent, "And ſo, Sir, you have "actually ruined Louiſa Mildmay!"

I don't know how it is, Melmoth, but there is ſomething in the nature of guilt which takes away our fortitude, and reduces us to a ſtate of the moſt contemptible timidity. You know I have as much courage as the generality of young fellows, and you know alſo what unhappy inſtances I have given of my knowledge in the weapons; yet, by all that's good, I could ſcarcely ſuſtain the the terror of Mildmay's eye on this occaſion—conſcious how much right he had to be offended. Conſcious of my own guilt, and lady Haverſham's letter ſtill ringing in my years, I ſhrunk in a

manner

manner into myſelf, and ſeemed fearful of encountering the ſhock of his indignation. I ſat dumb—irreſolute—confounded—my vacant eye held rivetted to the floor, and ſuch a viſible agitation in my whole perſon as would have given the colonel but a poor idea of my ſpirit, had he not been already pretty well acquainted with my character. The colonel, however, ſoon gave me all my cuſtomary courage, by exclaiming that I was a villain, a cowardly, contemptible villain, who had baſely made uſe of the moſt infamous arts to ſeduce the inexperienced innocence of a beautiful young lady, and to blaſt the reputation of a family, with which I was utterly unworthy to be connected. The colonel was proceeding in this manner, and giving an unbounded looſe to a ſtorm of incoherent fury, when I interrupted him,—"Colonel," ſays I, "this is language "with which I have been totally unac-

"quainted;

"quainted; and it is language which "would poſſibly coſt you very dear, "was I not ſenſible you have ſome cauſe "to be offended with me; and, was I "not deſirous of ſhewing every regard "which I am now able to manifeſt, "both for the honour of your family "and the peace of your beautiful ſiſter. "—I grant my behaviour has been cul- "pable, greatly culpable, and it is with "infinite concern I reflect on the anxiety "which my miſbehaviour has already "produced—What more can I either "ſay or do? An altercation between "you and I is much more likely to en- "creaſe the general unhappineſs of our "friends than to remove it. You know, "that, ſhould it even be my lot to fall "in this altercation, neither your houſe "nor your ſiſter can be benefitted by "that circumſtance; whereas, on the "contrary, ſhould you be unſucceſsful, "both muſt naturally experience an-

"addition

" addition of the moſt exquiſite diſtreſs.
" —Do me the juſtice, colonel Mildmay,
" to believe, that this expoſtulation is
" not the reſult of timidity—I have al-
" ready injured your houſe, and it muſt
" be the moſt preſſing neceſſity indeed
" which can oblige me to run even the
" hazard of aggravating my fault.—Do
" not, therefore, by indulging an injudi-
" cious warmth, either prevent me from
" the poſſibility of making a reparation,
" or expoſe your family to the hazard
" of new misfortunes. Happineſs is
" yet within our reach, and it muſt be
" very much your fault if it is ſnatched
" from our hands."

This long harangue, Charles, I pronounced with an uncommon degree of temper; but I could eaſily ſee that it had little effect upon colonel Mildmay; full of that ridiculous ſort of honour which is above liſtening to reaſon, he en-

endeavoured to break in upon me ſeveral times; and, when I had done, inſtead of moderating his paſſion, he rather ſeemed to give it an additional force; ſwearing that, though a cool hypocritical ſpeech might ſilence the reſentment of his ſiſter, he was not to be duped from his purpoſe by the moſt ſpecious plauſibilities; but would vindicate the honour of his family, and proceed inſtantly to the neceſſary means of redreſs.

"And pray, colonel," ſays I, "how "do you purpoſe to obtain this re-"dreſs?" "Purpoſe," returned he ſhortly, "as a man of honour — Be "pleaſed to ſtay for me but two minutes "and you ſhall be more fully ſatisfied." So ſaying, he ran down ſtairs to his chariot, which was all the time waiting at the door, and took out a caſe of piſtols, (for I could ſee every thing diſtinctly through the window.) Theſe he

he concealed under a ſurtout, which he had on; and coming up with a lightning-like expedition, to the room in which he left me, entered and bolted the door. Having done thus, he marched up directly to me, and ſwore, with a determined energy of execration, that, unleſs I inſtantly accepted of one, and ſtood upon my defence, he would, without any farther ceremony, ſhoot me through the head. All this time, Charles, I kept my temper with a ſtoiciſm that that was really aſtoniſhing—"Colonel," ſays I, as he pronounced the laſt menace, "conſider that you have a man "before you who is not eaſily intimi-"dated; but who, as he wiſhes to re-"pair, inſtead of aggravating injuries, is "willing to overlook the inſults which "you have offered him, and to embrace "you as a brother and a friend.—For "your ſiſter's ſake, Sir, conſider."—— "Damnation ſeize my ſiſter," interrupt-

ed

ed he, wildly, "it is not her honour "which I want to vindicate, but my "own—She is an infamous ſtrumpet, "and you are a cowardly, hypocritical "ſcoundrel—take the piſtol, Sir,—this "moment take it and defend yourſelf; "for, by all that's holy, if you heſitate "another inſtant, I will anticipate the "juſtice of the gibbet, and rid the world "of as great a villain as ever diſhonour-"ed it." This language, Charles, was no longer to be borne; the ſcandalous epithet with which he had branded poor Louiſa, and the brutality of inſolence with which he treated all my conceſſions, entirely deſtroyed my fortitude; ſo that now forgetting every conſideration, I ſnatched the piſtol out of his hand, and retiring to a ſpace, which he himſelf had pointed out, I fired, and wounded him ſo dangerouſly in the groin, that he inſtantly fell upon the floor, diſcharging his piſtol; however, as he fell, the contents

of

of which juſt drew a little blood from my ear, but did me no farther injury, unleſs burning a curl of the ſide hair may be termed an injury to a fellow ſo fond of dreſſing as your humble ſervant.

I ran to the colonel the moment I ſaw him down, and offered him every aſſiſtance in my power; but he was now in a manner frantic; the anguiſh of his wound, and the mortification of finding I had come off ſo eaſily, threw him into an extravagant paſſion, and he raved at me, his ſiſter, and his own unexecuting hand, with all the fury of an implacable reſentment, and a diſappointed revenge; diſclaiming every conſolation which I was capable of offering, and ſwearing he would ſtill purſue me to the utmoſt confines of the world till he had ſacrificed me to the manes of his murdered reputation. Finding him in this temper,

and knowing that the ſooner I provided for my own ſafety the better, as I found from the nature of his wound that his ſituation was dangerous, I marched down ſtairs to my chaiſe with my handkerchief to my ear, and drove immediately off towards Briſtol, giving previous directions, however, to the people of the houſe, who had not yet been alarmed, to take the moſt ſpeedy and effectual care of the colonel.

My firſt care on my arrival at Briſtol, was to ſend Edwards in queſt of ſome veſſel immediately ready to ſail, and in leſs than an hour he came back with intelligence that the captain of a ſhip bound to Rotterdam, was preparing to ſet off the next tide. As it was a matter of indifference to me which way I purſued my rout, I ordered him to agree with the Dutchman, and ſat down to give you an account of this

unfortunate

unfortunate accident before I left the kingdom. You cannot imagine, Charles, how miſerable it has made me—No leſs in diſappointing the eagerneſs of my wiſhes to be reconciled to Louiſa, than in loading the two families with additional diſtreſs; neither lady Haverſham, nor Miſs Mildmay will ever believe but what I have been entirely to blame in this curſt rencounter; and ſhould the colonel even recover, the danger into which I have thrown his life, muſt neceſſarily impede an accommodation with his ſiſter—Then he is ſo implacable in his reſentments, and his father is ſo carried away by the ridiculous notions of family reputation, that I much queſtion whether he would not believe himſelf rather bound in honour to treat me with the groſſeſt indignities, than to think of liſtening to any overtures which I may make towards a reconciliation. How cautiouſly my dear Melmoth, ſhould

young fellows of any principle be in their conduct to women of character; ſince a ſingle indiſcretion can be productive of ſuch numberleſs misfortunes. Here have I with as little villainy of intention as ever influenced the boſom of giddy headed youth; with little more in fact to charge myſelf than a mere want of circumſpection, deſtroyed the reputation of a woman whom I paſſionately love; converted the ſmiling expectations of her whole family into anguiſh and diſgrace; robbed her brother, perhaps, of his life; and ſacrificed not only my own peace of mind for ever, but covered all my friends with confuſion and diſtreſs. How ſome people, Melmoth, can preſerve their tranquility with ſuch a ſcene before them is to me aſtoniſhing. A man not utterly diveſted of feeling, muſt look with horror on himſelf where he has been the cauſe of ſuch a complicated wretchedneſs.

For

For my own part, thoughtleſs as I have been in many connections with the ſex, the conſequences which have reſulted from this affair with Miſs Mildmay, makes me deteſt what I formerly eſteemed the principal ſource of felicity; and convinces me that a man of gallantry is no leſs a contemptible than a dangerous character. O! Charles, could my whole fortune recover that chearful ſerenity of mind which I poſſeſſed but a week ago, how readily would I think of making the purchaſe; but happineſs is totally incompatible with guilt, and it is but juſt that he who is inſtrumental in the miſery of others ſhould experience the ſharpeſt ſtings of miſery himſelf.

Before I conclude this letter, I muſt, however, mention ſome things to you relative to Miſs Mildmay. By her mother's letter I underſtand, that ſhe is to be ſupplied with money only as the good old lady can conveniently ſpare it,

till time can ſo work upon the obſtinate temper of her father, as to obtain ſome regular allowance for her eſtabliſhment; all ſhe has in the world is five hundred pounds; this is but a ſmall ſum for a lady of her faſhion to live upon a whole year, tho' I ſuppoſe, ſhe will not in her preſent circumſtances chooſe to be very public; however, that ſhe may ſuffer as little as poſſible upon my account, contrive through lady Haverſham's means ſome method of making the dear girl receive a thouſand pounds a year to ſupport a carriage, and to purchaſe all the other conveniences which ſhe has been uſed to in her father's houſe: I need not tell you, that the taſk I now impoſe is a difficult one, and that the execution of it will demand the utmoſt delicacy and addreſs; Louiſa is all ſoul; yet nobody knows how to give things a better manner than my ſiſter, and if there is a poſſibility of managing the

matter

matter I am ſenſible ſhe will be able to effect it. It is unneceſſary to ſay that I muſt on no account appear in the affair. If Miſs Mildmay could be cheated into an opinion, that the allowance is made privately by her father, who is unwilling to ſhew how much he ſtill loves her; or if—But damn it, I am all the time forgetting that her family would wonder by what method ſhe was enabled to keep an equipage; and, perhaps, from an opinion that it was by ſome ſiniſter means — you underſtand me — become leſs inclined to forgive her — this way therefore will never do—Yet ſtay—I have it.

Suppoſe my ſiſter was ſecretly to make Mrs. Darnel the allowance I have been talking of for Louiſa's eaſe; I have ſome little knowledge of Mrs. Darnel, and I fancy her circumſtances are none of the beſt—Under an affectation of great gravity I am ſure ſhe conceals an

inſuperable

inſuperable pride, and ſeems to diſpiſe that glitter from principle, which ſhe is unable to enjoy from the narrowneſs of her fortune; lady Haverſham may therefore ſet up a chariot for Mrs. Darnel; Louiſa you know by reſiding with her will have it at command; and Mrs. Darnel ſhall have it rendered worth her while to preſent her amiable couſin with a ſufficient ſum of money as opportunities occur, for all her other contingencies. Mrs. Darnel I ſee has obligations to the Mildmay family; but whatever ſhe loſes by her politeneſs on this occaſion, ſhall be doubled to her by an annuity, or how ſhe pleaſes; ſhe may talk of a ticket in the lottery, you know, or make any other common excuſe for the alteration of appearances.

And yet Melmoth, I am ſome how ſorry Louiſa is to be at Mrs. Darnel's, ſhe is a woman of whom I entertain no very

very great opinion. I have been three or four times in her company at accidental viſits, and always found her ſo humble, and ſo fawning; ſo religious and ſo ſentimental; that I am fearful my poor Louiſa will have but a diſagreeable companion. An exceſs of humility to thoſe who are our ſuperiors in fortune is always a ſign of a mean mind; the heart is unworthy of reſpect, which never ſeems inclined to aſſert its natural equality; and I would much ſooner commence a friendſhip with thoſe who are perpetually contradicting me, than with thoſe who have a ſmile for every thing I ſay, and never take the liberty to contradict me at all.

The maſter of the veſſel has this moment called to take me on board—Till I hear from you I ſhall take up my reſidence at the great marſhal Turene's in Rotterdam—I have uſed the houſe once already,

already, and found the people very careful of my letters. Pray write immediately, and let your pacquet be a large one; enquire minutely into the colonel's ſituation, and tell me what is ſaid by lady Haverſham, and Louiſa. O! Charles, adverſity is your only forcible moraliſt; the pangs which I now ſuffer in conſequence of my folly give me a higher veneration for virtue than the works of our moſt celebrated philoſophers; and I find more wiſdom is to be obtained from a moment's experience than from a whole eternity of idle ſpeculation—But when reflection comes too late of what ſervice is it to moralize! God bleſs you therefore my dear Melmoth, and believe me to be with an everlaſting attachment

Your Friend

ROBERT HAROLD.

BRITISH MUSEUM 10.MY.72

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.